HARRY WATSON'S HIGH SCHOOL DAYS



FRANK V. WEBSTER

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Harold Francis Pray



WITH THE NEW STUDENT STILL BORNE ALOFT THEY RETRACED THEIR STEPS.

HARRY WATSON'S HIGH SCHOOL DAYS

Or

The Rivals of Rivertown

BY

FRANK V. WEBSTER

AUTHOR OF "ONLY A FARM BOY," "AIRSHIP ANDY," "THE BOYS OF BELLWOOD SCHOOL," ETC.

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HARRY WATSON'S HIGH SCHOOL DAYS

CHAPTER I

HARRY SHOWS HIS METTLE

"HEY, fellows, we've a new student at Rivertown High!"

"Who is he, Socker?" chorused a group of boys to whom their schoolmate had come running with his tidings.

"Don't know. Nettie told me that she and Viola had met him as he was coming out of Principal Larmore's office."

"Yes, and you'd better watch out, Elmer. Nettie said Viola has been talking about nothing else but that good-looking fellow since she saw him!" bantered another of the group.

The boy, light and rather handsome, but with a weak face, to whom this last remark had been addressed was about to reply, when a warning was sounded.

"Keep quiet! Here he comes now!" declared Socker.

Instantly all eyes were turned in the direction of the schoolhouse where they saw a lad walking with a swinging stride. Apparently about fifteen years of age, he was well built and rather tall. Dark hair, which curled about his cap, and laughing eyes bespoke him as a jolly, handsome fellow, and the ruddy glow brought to his cheeks by the crisp winter air was evidence that he was possessed of health in abundance.

"Why, I know who he is!" asserted another of the group.

"Who?"

"He must be Harry Watson, nephew of the Widow Watson. I remember Mrs. Watson told mother the other day that her nephew, Harry, was coming to Rivertown."

"Where's he from?"

"Can't say."

"Well, let's see if he's any good!" exclaimed a big, hulking fellow, Pud Snooks, who was the bully of the school. "Hey, you, Watson, come over here!" he shouted.

Rivertown High School, a two-story brick building containing some fifteen class rooms and a large assembly room, was situated on a bluff overlooking the Conoque River: and the road leading from

it to the village, in addition to being steep, made a sharp turn at the foot of the hill.

The spot was a favorite one with the scholars for coasting, and several of the boys had been in the act of placing a double-runner bob in position at the top of the hill, when they had been apprised of the fact there was a new student in school.

The boys of Rivertown High had a fondness for trying out new students, and Pud's suggestion met with ready approval.

Accordingly, when the bully proposed putting Harry Watson to the test, the other boys sat down on the double-runner, taking good care to leave the steering seat vacant.

"When I shove off, everybody stand up!" whispered Pud. Then he exclaimed aloud:

"Hey, Watson! Can you steer a sled?"

Stopping as he heard his name, Harry looked toward the group of boys.

"Sure thing, if you'd like to have me," he answered. "My name is Harry Watson."

"And mine's Pud Snooks," announced the bully. Then bowing in mock seriousness, he continued:

"That fancy blonde behind me is Elmer Craven. He is the richest and most famous personage we have at Rivertown High. Twice a week he goes across the river to Lumberport, and he

believes that Viola Darrow is never happy when——"

"Oh, cut it out, Pud!" growled Elmer.

With a grin, the bully went on with his introductions.

"The next exhibit is Socker Gales, and the specimen with the ten-foot reach is Longback, whom his family calls Sam Dalton. Now just take the ropes and I'll push off. We're a precious load, as I hope I've made clear to you, so don't tip us over!"

While Harry had been acknowledging these bantering introductions, he had also been looking at the icy roadway.

A glance at the sharp turn had told him it would require clever work to make it, and so, when he took the steering ropes, instead of sitting down on the sled, he gave them a quick jerk—to have one of them part near the runner.

"Good thing that didn't happen on the hill!" he exclaimed, quickly cutting off the broken end and making a new knot, after which he again tested the rope and found it sound.

Pud and his chums, however, though they pretended to, did not share this opinion, and that there might not be more delay, as soon as Harry sat down and placed his feet on the bracers, the bully started the sled.

"We're off!" he shouted, as he gave the double-runner a terrific shove.

As though eager for the fun, the first sled shot over the crest of the hill—and then all the boys put their feet down and let the sled pass between their legs!

Instantly Harry realized that he was alone on the double-runner.

With no weight on the hind sled, he knew it would bump and slew as soon as he got fairly started and especially when he struck the curve. But Harry was game.

"I'll show these Rivertown High chaps that they can't stump me by any of their tricks," he said to himself, and braced his feet more firmly, leaning back to throw as much weight as possible on the hind sled.

As the double-runner gained momentum, it fairly danced over the icy roadway.

Behind, Pud and his cronies were hurrying as fast as they could that they might gain a spot whence they could see the spill they expected when the sled struck the curve.

But as Harry approached the turn, he leaned far out.

"Oh, you Pud! You guessed wrong when you picked Watson for an easy mark," chuckled Longback. "That boy knows something about steering."

The next instant, however, the disappointment of the boys at learning that they were not to have the fun of seeing Harry dumped, was forgotten in their alarm at hearing shouts of warning and fright beyond the curve!

Just as Harry's sled dashed around the turn, he had caught sight of two little children starting up the hill, dragging their sleds behind them.

A group of high school girls, among them Viola Darrow and her chum, Nettie Masterson, were descending the hill, and it was they who, when they heard the rattlety-bang of the double-runner, and saw the toddlers ahead, had cried out in terror.

One side of the road was banked by the hill, while the other dropped down toward the river; a fence with one rail some three feet from the ground serving as a guard.

What was below the embankment Harry did not know, but he remembered to have seen some bushes as he had walked up the hill.

In their effort to save the children, the girls had run out into the roadway, practically blocking it.

So great was Harry's speed, however, that they realized it would be impossible for them to seize the toddlers and get them to one side in time to let the double-runner pass—and in such a manner were they spread across the road that

Harry had no chance to guide his sled past them.

"Open out! Let him through!" shouted Longback and Socker; while Elmer and Pud, terrified at the impending tragedy threatened by their trick, simply stared at the scene in silence, their faces white, their mouths agape.

But in the instant that had followed his discovery of the little girls starting up the roadway, Harry had made up his mind what to do—and acted.

With a sudden pull, he jerked the sled from it's course, headed it between two of the posts which supported the guard rail—and the double-runner leaped over the embankment at a spot less than six feet from where the group of girls and the two children stood, panic-stricken and crying.

CHAPTER II

JED BROWN FINDS A PROTECTOR

SEVERAL of the other boys who were members of Rivertown High, among them Paul Martin and Jerry Post, had reached the turn just in time to see the sled as it took its mad leap over the embankment.

For a moment, they, as well as the girls, gazed in silence at the spot where the double-runner with its lone passenger had disappeared. Then, as with one accord, they broke into lusty cheers at the aversion of the tragedy which had seemed inevitable.

But their joy was quickly checked.

"Don't cheer! You don't know what has happened to that nervy chap!" shouted Paul Martin.

And as his words brought silence, he and Jerry rushed to the edge of the embankment, while the others followed.

Fortunately Harry had landed in a pile of underbrush, and as the white-faced boys and girls lined the rail he was picking his way out, none the

worse for his experience save a few rents in his clothes.

The sight of the boy, safe and sound, brought a reaction from the terror, and wildly the scholars cheered, while Paul, Jerry and Longback ducked under the guard-rail and slipped and slid down to meet the hero.

"Hurt?" asked Jerry, anxiously.

"Nowhere, except in my clothes," returned Harry—and again prolonged cheers greeted his ears.

Many were the willing hands that were extended to help draw him up into the road, and when they had succeeded, he became immediately the centre of an excited, admiring group.

"I think that was just perfectly splendid of him!" exclaimed Viola. "Some of you boys introduce me to him, won't you?"

As she spoke, the girl, whose beauty and wealth made her the favorite of the school, looked straight at Elmer—but he gave no sign that he noticed her.

Their leader having thus given the stamp of approval to Harry, the other girls quickly pressed forward, all talking and chatting at once.

But no one responded to Viola's request and, flushing, she turned away while the new student grew very red, as he looked from one to another

of the boys who had invited him to steer the double-runner.

The situation was awkward in the extreme and Harry, diffident and sensitive as he was, felt it keenly. Yet he was the one to relieve it.

"Hey, you Snooks, you'd better go down and get your sled—or do you want me to do that?" he called.

"So it was one of Pud's tricks?" exclaimed Nettie. "We might have known it, Viola. Pud, I think you're perfectly horrid!" and with all the dignity of her fifteen years, the girl turned her back on the bully and, putting her arm through Viola's, led her away down the hill. But as they went, both girls smiled at Harry.

During the embarrassing scene, Longback had whispered to some of the other boys who Harry was, and Jerry and Paul immediately took him in tow.

"If you don't mind, we'll walk home with you, Watson," exclaimed Jerry. And glad of the chance to escape the attention of the other members of Rivertown High, Harry started off, accompanied by the two boys who were later to become his chums.

The story of Harry's quick-wittedness and courage had proceeded him, thanks to Viola and Nettie; and as he walked down the main street of the

town to the comfortable home of his aunt, many were the glances directed toward him.

"Rather a bad start, I'm afraid," he said to his compaions, with a feeble attempt at a smile.

"Bad? I should say it was a corking fine one!" returned Paul, sincerely. "It isn't many fellows who can become a hero and at the same time get the best of Pud Snooks!"

The mention of the bully caused Harry to grow serious.

"I'm afraid it will make Snooks down on me," he said. "He had no idea that those little girls would be in the road."

Well did Jerry and Paul know that the outcome of the bully's trick, sensational as it had been, would, indeed, arouse his anger against the boy who had turned the tables on him; and though they tried to disabuse Harry's mind of the idea, it was with relief that they reached the gate of the Widow Watson's house.

Despite Harry's cordial invitation, both boys declined to go in, and he entered the house feeling strangely alone.

His aunt's greeting and loving words of praise after she had heard of his experience, however, did much to restore his good spirits.

"Who is Viola?" he asked, as they were seated at dinner.

"She is the daughter of one of the wealthiest

men in Rivertown," replied the widow, a shade of sorrow passing over her face. "What makes you ask?"

"Because she said my steering over the embankment was perfectly fine!"

Again the cloud passed over Mrs. Watson's face and this time it did not lift.

"She's a very sweet and lovely girl, Harry," she replied. "But she isn't the sort you should choose for a companion."

At the words, the boy looked up quickly at his aunt and what he read in her face made him flush.

"I mean, she is very rich and I think—that is, I have heard—her family intend her to marry Elmer Craven."

"He's rich, too, isn't he?"

"Yes."

Deeply did it grieve the good woman to speak the words she had, but she believed it would be best for her nephew to realize the social difference that existed between Viola and himself, that he might be spared the humiliation and embarrassment in the future. Though they allowed their daughter to attend the Rivertown High School, the Darrows were proud and arrogant people and always did all in their power to prevent the girl from mingling with her schoolmates.

But though Mrs. Watson strove to offset the sting of her statement, the rest of the dinner was

eaten in comparative silence, and Harry set out for school with a heavy heart.

Not far had he proceeded up the main street, however, before he caught sight of a form he recognized as that of the bully who had been the ringleader in the trick which had so nearly ended in a tragedy.

"Hope he won't come up and try to smooth things over," said Harry to himself. But the next moment, his anxiety on this score was allayed.

Pud was busy making snowballs and storing them under his arm.

"Wonder if he's going to vent his disappointment on me," mused Harry, taking his hands from his pockets that he might be ready to return the bombardment, should the bully open on him.

Yet when he saw the bully's victim, Harry's anger at the fellow was greater than ever.

As the new student passed a cross street, he saw Pud jump behind a tree and then, peering from one side, hurl one of the half dozen snowballs he had under his arm.

Turning to see at whom they were aimed, Harry was amazed to behold a bent and aged man, hobbling along the sidewalk with the aid of a cane.

The snowball knocked the cane from the man's hand and as it fell, the aged cripple tottered.

With an exclamation of disgust, Harry rushed

up behind the bully and, seizing his arm, jerked it so that the remaining snowballs fell to the sidewalk.

The thought that any one had seen his cowardly act in snowballing the aged man shamed the bully, but only for the moment.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded, fiercely, whirling round to face the interrupter of what he considered his sport. And as he beheld the boy who had brought disgrace upon him in the morning, his face grew white with anger. "Oh, it's *you,* is it?" he went on. "Who do you think you are, anyhow? Just because you couldn't steer the sled and went over the embankment is no reason why you should think you are so much!"

"You know I could steer that sled, and only went between the posts to keep from running into the girls," returned Harry. "But that has nothing to do with the present matter. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, to throw snowballs at an old man!"

"Oh, nobody cares about old Jed Brown!"

"Well, you can't snowball him when I'm round!"

"Oh, is that so? Who's going to stop me, I should like to know?"

"I am."

"You?" And, after standing for several seconds, during which he looked Harry over from



HARRY RUSHED UP BEHIND THE BULLY AND SEIZED HIS ARM.

the top of his head to his feet, the bully burst into laughter. "So *you,* whom I could pick up and carry on one finger, are going to stop my doing anything I want to, eh? That *is* a good one. Why, kiddo, there is enough of me to make three of you and then some."

The tone in which Pud spoke sent the color flushing to Harry's face.

"Where I come from, it isn't so much the size that counts as it is the heart!" he retorted. "And a fellow who will snowball an aged man can't have very much real heart!"

An instant the bully glowered at Harry, then made a rush toward him.

"You're getting altogether too fresh, young feller!" he hissed. "Because of you, I'm getting into all sorts of trouble—and I'm not going to stand it! If I want to snowball or do anything else to old Jed Brown, I'm going to, understand?" And as though to give more force to his words, Pud stooped down to pick up one of the missiles the new student had knocked from his arm.

Before he could reach it, however, Harry threw out his foot and crushed the snowball, then with more quick movements demolished the others.

Never had any one so thwarted the Rivertown bully before and, for the moment, the big hulk of a boy stood gazing at his discomfiter in amazement. But only for a moment.

With a snarl, he shook his fist under Harry's nose.

"You seem to be looking for trouble—and now you're going to get it!"

Though the bully was much larger than Harry, the latter did not cower before him.

So engrossed had the boys been in their quarrel that they had failed to notice the approach of Principal Larmore. But he made his presence known just as Pud drew back his arm to strike.

"Snooks, go about your business!" he exclaimed. "I'm ashamed to think you should seek to pick a quarrel with the very boy who prevented your trick with the sled from having a very serious ending!"

As Harry had said, the bully was a coward at heart, and growling to himself, he slunk away.

CHAPTER III

SOCKER'S PLOT

WITH an amused smile, Mr. Larmore watched Pud as he slouched off up the street.

"Rather a strenuous introduction to Rivertown, you're having, Watson," he exclaimed, pleasantly. "Do you mind telling me what Snooks was saying to you?"

"Yes, sir; I do. It was only a personal matter."

Fate, however, decreed that the principal should learn the cause of the quarrel he had interrupted.

First with surprise, then with thankfulness, Jed Brown had beheld Harry's intervention—for the aged man, veteran though he was, and bearing the mark of his service for his country in a crippled leg, was considered fair sport by many of the young people in the village, and he was not accustomed to having any one champion him.

Consequently, when he had seen the school bully threaten Harry, he had hobbled toward the pair as fast as he could, only to arrive just as Mr

Larmore had asked concerning the cause of the trouble.

"It was about me, Mr. Larmore, sir, the fuss was," declared Jed. "Snooks was throwing snowballs at me and this young man stopped him." Then, turning to Harry, he continued: "I'll not forget your kindness, my boy. My name is Jed Brown." And he extended a trembling hand.

"I'm Harry Watson," smiled the boy, as he shook hands.

"You ain't any relation to Amos Watson, of Lawrenceburgh, are you?" inquired the veteran, eagerly.

"He's my father."

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Jed, excitedly, again shaking the boy's hand. "I've known Amos ever since he was knee high to a grasshopper, and there ain't a finer man in this state, Mr. Larmore. Harry, whenever your skates need sharpening or you feel lonesome, just come around to see me; I live in a little one-story house down at the end of this street. You can't miss it."

"Thank you, I—" then, chancing to glance down the street, the boy caught a glimpse of Pud as he poked his head cautiously from behind a tree-trunk, evidently with the purpose of finding out where the veteran was, and he changed his words, saying, "I guess I'll walk along with you

now. I have a knife that needs sharpening badly and I can leave it with you."

The principal had also seen the bully's action and he readily understood that Harry had made his knife the excuse for walking home with the old man, that he might protect him from any further attack by Snooks. Yet he feared the bully might waylay the boy and, as the other two set out, fell into step beside them, much to the embarrassment of both.

Arrived at Jed's house which, though small, was spick and span in appearance, Harry gave him his knife, and after promising to call for it the next afternoon, continued on his way to the school with Mr. Larmore.

The detour which they had made to escort the veteran to his home caused them to be a trifle late in reaching the schoolhouse, and Harry was very glad that none of the scholars were outside to see him walking with the principal, for he feared it might give them the impression that he was a "teacher's boy."

But when he entered his classroom, he was the centre of all eyes.

"Grandstand play!" growled Elmer to Socker. "He's got a swelled head, already, because he steered the sled over the bank. Anybody with any decency wouldn't have waited until school was in session before he came in."

"Never mind, we'll take him down a bit!" returned Elmer Craven's chum. "Just wait till after school!"

The eye of the instructor chancing to wander in their direction, the two boys buried their heads in their books; and Elmer was forced to forego asking his chum what scheme he was thinking out.

But when school was over for the day, he quickly learned.

"Play hockey, Watson?" asked Socker, joining a group of boys who had gathered about Harry.

"Yes."

"Then come on down to the river and we'll have a game."

"It will depend upon whether my trunk has arrived or not. If it hasn't come since I was at aunt's for dinner, I won't be able to play because my skates are in it."

"I have an extra pair at the house you can take," interposed Paul. "The rest of you fellows go down to the river; and Harry and I'll join you as soon as we can." And falling into step beside the boy who was soon to become his crony, Paul Martin started down the hill which had been the scene of the memorable incident in the morning.

To his delight, Harry found that his trunk had arrived, and it was but the matter of a very few minutes for him to open it and take out his skates.

At the river, they found a merry crowd of boys and girls, and quickly Harry and Paul sat down to put on their skates.

"Now Sam, you go over and bring Mr. Watson back with you as soon as he's got his skates on," commanded Viola, who, with Nettie, had been keeping a lookout for the boy whom she had been unable to meet in the forenoon.

None too willingly, the fellow started, but before he could reach Harry, the boy was on his feet, and hockey stick in hand, was skimming over the ice to where those who were to play were lined up, some quarter of a mile up the river.

"Isn't that provoking!" pouted Viola, as she noted his action. "But I'm going to meet Harry Watson—even if I have to introduce myself. Come on, Nettie, let's skate over and watch the game."

With the arrival of Harry and Paul, Socker exclaimed:

"Watson, you'll play on Jerry's team. Let's get the game started as soon as we can. It'll be dark before long."

Quickly the boys took their positions, and Socker and Elmer noticed with delight that the boy who had incited their enmity was playing "rover."

After the puck was put in play, it was dribbled back and forth; then, as Paul noticed Harry was

keeping well out to one side, he shot the rubber to him.

Nursing it carefully, he dashed in, that he might have a less difficult angle from which to try for goal.

"Get him! Block him! Don't let him score!" cried Socker to his team-mates, and with a rush they skated down upon Harry with tremendous momentum.

For several moments, Jerry watched the strange play of his oponents—for they had left their positions uncovered; then it dawned on him what their purpose was and he charged down to Harry's rescue, at the same time shouting:

"Shoot it across, Watson! Shoot it across!"

With a deft twist of his wrist, Harry sent the rubber spinning over the ice just in front of Socker and his players.

But instead of checking themselves and going after it, they continued straight at the new student.

Surprised, but believing that their speed was such that they were unable to turn quickly, Harry grinned at them, wheeled on his right skate with a suddenness that would have done a professional proud, and sought to go around them.

Clever as was his move, however, it came too late.

With terrific force, Socker, Elmer and another

boy crashed into him—and as they all went down, there was a resounding whack.

"Pretty raw work, Craven!" snapped Jerry, as he caught the richest boy in Rivertown High School by the collar and jerked him off the pile.

"What do you mean?"

Jerry, however, was too engrossed in the task of getting the others off Harry to reply.

But when he had succeeded, the new high school scholar lay on his back, motionless.

CHAPTER IV

HARRY SHOWS HIS GRIT

ABASHED at the sight of the boy lying white and still on the ice, the other hockey players gazed at one another.

"He's shamming!" growled Elmer.

"You know better than that!" retorted Jerry.

"What do you mean?"

"That you and Socker deliberately ran into Watson—and you know it as well as I do!"

"I saw Socker give him the knee!" interposed Paul.

Intense was the feeling between the two teams, and instinctively the boys who had been playing lined up with their respective captains. But before the argument became more bitter, Harry opened his eyes, gazed about him in a dazed manner, and then sat up.

"Got a bit of a knock, didn't I?" he smiled. "I say, did I score a goal?"

At the question, all the boys turned to look toward the net of Socker's team, having forgotten in

their excitement to notice where the puck had gone.

"Jove, but you did!" cried Paul. "Good boy, Harry!"

Instantly the other members of the team with which Harry was playing took up the cry and Elmer and his companions skated away to hide their chagrin.

"Here comes Longback; we can put him in, and you can get out of the game!" exclaimed Paul, helping Harry to his feet.

"Not much—that is, if you are willing I should keep on playing," returned Harry. "I'm all right now; and I should like to show those other fellows that I'm not a pillow!"

"But can you stand the handling?" asked Jerry, anxiously.

"Leave it to me—I'm no rag-doll," retorted Harry. "If they are up to any tricks, I know a thing or two!"

The gameness of the new student appealed to all the members of the team on which he was playing, and without further comment they lined up for the next play.

Surprised to see Harry still in the line-up, Socker skated over to Elmer and held a brief consultation with him, but their whisperings were interrupted by the puck being put into play.

As luck would have it, the rubber was sent

straight toward Elmer and, with a clever stop, he dribbled it along toward Harry, evidently thinking that he would be able to pass him easily because of his seemingly dazed condition.

But Harry realized his purpose and, with a burst of speed, he rushed in, snatched the puck, steadied his stick—and then drove it spinning toward the goal net, sending it past the tender.

"Good boy!" shouted his team-mates. And the cheer was immediately taken up by the boys and girls who had gathered to watch the game.

Smarting more under the thought that the fellow they had sought to humiliate had succeeded in turning the tables against them than in the fact that their opponents had scored two goals, Socker called his men about him.

"Play for Watson!" he cried through clenched teeth. "That fellow's got to have his big head taken off him!"

"Ready!" called the lad who was acting as umpire; and with set teeth, Socker's men took their positions.

Straight and true for the goal Paul sent the puck, but Snooks checked it just in time to prevent another score, and cleverly Elmer took the rubber through the opposing players until only Harry stood between him and the man at the net.

Gritting his teeth, the new member of the Rivertown High School determined to show that he was

an offensive as well as a defensive player. With a terrific rush, he bore down on Elmer Craven, and with a sudden twist of his stick, tripped the fellow, grabbed the rubber, dribbled it out of reach, then sent it spinning with a force that drove it through the net!

Loud were the shouts from the onlookers—but Elmer lay still and quiet.

"You hit him in the head with your stick!" growled Socker, starting toward Harry.

"Nonsense! *I* play a clean game! Leave it to me—I'll bring him round in a jiffy!"

And while the others stood inactive, Harry scraped up some ice with his skate and rubbed the shavings on Craven's face.

"Who's doing that?" demanded the boy, sitting up.

But his only answer was a general laugh.

"Everybody ready, puck's going to be put in play!" shouted the umpire, and without delay, the boys took their positions.

"You want to watch out, the whole team will be down on you this time!" warned Jerry to Harry, but the lad only laughed.

"I reckon I can give them as good as they send," he replied. "It just took me a few minutes to get onto their game. I——"

But his words were interrupted by the play.

While Snooks caught the rubber and started

back with it, all the other members of the team bore down on Harry.

Not seeming to notice them, the boy hurried to the assistance of the goal tender, his pursuers in full cry. Then, with a suddenness that caused the scholars on the side lines to gasp, Harry turned, shoved his stick between the skates of the fellow nearest him, and sent him sprawling on the ice, causing the others to fall on top of him.

Loud was the laughter that rose from the boys and girls who were not in the game, while Jerry and Paul patted Harry on the back.

But several of the instructors happened to be among the spectators and, realizing that the game would soon be beyond the bounds of sport, they intervened.

"Vhy not ve all go and get kindling voods for a bonfire dis efening?" shouted Prof. Schmidt, the genial German professor.

"Yes! Yes!" Get wood for a bonfire!" cried the boys and girls on the side lines; and forgetful of the hockey game, they skated across the ice, effectually putting an end to the contest.

CHAPTER V

THE RACE ON SKATES

In thorough good humor on account of their winning the hockey game, Paul and Jerry called Harry, and together they started up the river to where a big pile of brush lay on the bank.

In full cry, a score or more of the other boys and girls, among whom were Viola and Nettie, set after them, calling to them to wait. But the three boys only checked their speed slightly.

"Come on. A race for the brush-pile," shouted Longback. "I'll wager hot soda for the bunch of us that I'll be the first one to reach it."

"You're on! You're on!" shouted a dozen of the boys, among whom were Harry and his recent team-mates.

And as the challenge was accepted, the boys dashed away.

No more than a few yards had he gone, than Elmer Craven shouted:

"Oh, you Paul and Jerry! You've got the start of the rest of us. Come back and line up."

"No. This is as fair for one of us as it is for another," cried Pud, whose inordinate love for soda caused him to exert himself to the utmost, and during the checking of the speed as the result of Craven's suggestion, he had taken the lead.

"Sure you think it's fair now, Pud," laughed Jerry, "so long as you're ahead."

"You'll have to come back and line up as Elmer said or I won't make good my offer," declared Longback.

At this ultimatum all the boys who had started ahead checked themselves and then returned to where the offerer of the prize had scratched a mark on the ice.

With great good nature, laughing and joking with one another, the boys lined up, Harry and his two team-mates happening to be on the end where Viola and Nettie were standing.

"Who's going to give the word to start?" demanded Snooks in a none too pleasant tone, for he was disappointed at having had to give up the lead which he had obtained over the others.

"I will," cried Viola.

"That means Elmer'll win," declared Nettie.

"Why not let Prof. Schmidt start it?" suggested some one.

Readily the genial professor consented; and taking his position at the opposite end of the line from where the two girls stood, he cried:

"Eferybody get retty! You Schnooks, you get back onto the line. Don't try to shteal a yard."

Grumbling to himself, the boy obeyed.

"Now, vonce again. Eferybody retty! Von, two, t'ree—*Go!*"

Eagerly the boys dashed forward and for a few minutes they were all bunched together. Then Elmer, Snooks, Longback and Harry dashed ahead of the others, and for a few moments raced neck and neck.

"Go it, Elmer!" "Go it Longback!" shouted their partisans, and as though the good wishes of their friends gave them greater speed, the two boys forged ahead.

"Oh, why doesn't somebody shout for Harry Watson!" exclaimed Viola, stamping her foot.

"Going back on Elmer so soon," chided several of the girls who were with her. She made them no reply, but instead, skating after the racers.

"Come on, we girls will have a race, and the one who wins we'll crown queen of the ice at the bon-fire to-night!" cried Nettie.

"Fine! Dandy!" chorused a dozen or so of the girls, and one of them added:

"Let's have a regular carnival, and we'll make the boy who wins king."

"Will you start it, Prof. Schmidt?" asked

Viola, and again the genial old German complied, sending the girls off in short order.

During the preliminaries Viola had kept her eyes on the boys ahead, and it seemed to her as if Harry cut down the lead of Elmer and Longback. Instantly the thought occurred to her that if no one would introduce her to the new student, by winning the girl's race, she would surely be able to meet him at the mock coronation ceremony planned for the carnival. And, gritting her teeth, she bent forward, skating with all the speed she could summon.

After the start of the girls, the interest of the spectators had again turned to the boys and, that they might the better see the finish, everyone skated in the direction of the brush-pile.

When Snooks saw Harry taking the lead he grew furious.

"I'll get him! If I can't win, *he* certainly shan't," he growled to himself, and his anger at the boy who had so humiliated him on two occasions giving him increased strength, he quickly cut down Watson's lead, although in doing so, he swerved his course from the extreme opposite end of the line of racers close over to that of the boy for whom he had conceived such hatred.

"What's Pud up to?" exclaimed several of those who were following. But not long was the bully's purpose in doubt. Tiring from his burst

of speed when he was almost abreast of Harry, realizing that if he were to carry out his mean scheme he must act immediately, he lunged viciously towards the new student.

"Watch out, Watson! Snooks is trying to foul you!" shouted Jerry.

The warning was unnecessary, because Harry had heard the sharp strokes of the skates close to him, and, although he did not check his speed by looking around, he intuitively seemed to realize that the approach of the skater boded him no good; and, just as the bully sought to throw him off his balance, he turned his skate out and shot rapidly to one side, putting himself a scant foot beyond Snook's reach.

"Pretty work! Good boy!" shouted the spectators, as they realized the bully's attempt and our hero's escape.

But his move had taken Harry several yards out of his course, and quick were Elmer and Longback to improve the opportunity to wrest the lead from him. Clenching his fists more tightly, Harry bent lower, and exerted himself to the utmost to recover the lost ground. Less than one hundred yards away was the brush-pile, and a stick held in front of the racers would have touched each one, so even were they.

"Oh, you Elmer! Get a move on! They're going to have a carnival and crown the winner

king. The girls are racing to be queen, and Viola's leading!" shouting one of the scholars.

Thus apprised for the first time of the additional plans which had been made for the bonfire, the three boys bent themselves to still greater efforts.

To Elmer, the thought that Harry might win and thus share the honor of participating in the mock ceremony with Viola was bitter indeed.

"If there was no one else but Longback, I wouldn't care," he told himself. "But I can't let that scrub play king when Viola is queen."

Nearer and nearer to the finish the three boys sped, amid the yells and cheers of advice and encouragement their partisans hurled at them.

But though each of the trio was skating with might and main, not one of them seemed able to gain on the others—and the brush-pile was a scant fifty yards away.

"Shake 'em, Elmer! Shake 'em, Watson!" cried the spectators, according to their preference.

But another ten yards were cut from the distance to go, and Elmer and Harry were still abreast, having gained slightly on Longback.

With a sudden burst of speed Elmer forged ahead, amid the cheers of his supporters, but even as the air was rent by their shouts of "Elmer wins!" their hopes were dashed.

With no warning, the rich boy gave a sudden

lurch towards Watson, struggled desperately to recover himself, then fell to the ice, sliding with terrific force toward Harry.

At the sight, the boys and girls who were following cried out in surprise and disappointment, while Jerry and Paul shouted warnings to their new friend.

"That'll finish Watson as well as Elmer," declared one student.

But his prophecy was not to be fulfilled.

When he heard the shouts of warning, Harry had turned his head to learn their cause just in time to see Craven's body come sliding toward him over the ice with amazing speed.

Realizing that, should it hit him, he, too, would be knocked down, and the race go to the boy whom they had both outskated, Harry took a desperate chance and jumped, clearing Elmer's shoulder by a few inches.

CHAPTER VI

THE GIRLS' RACE

HARRY'S action was greeted with shouts of approval by all the scholars, but just when it seemed that he was going to win without further mishap, he fell and Longback flashed across the line a winner!

In landing after his jump, Harry had leaned too far forward, with the result that, though he strove desperately to keep his balance, his centre of equilibrium was too far forward, and he pitched onto his face.

Little time did the fellows have to discuss the eventful race, when there sounded a cry: "Get out of the way! Give the girls a chance to finish!"

Quickly the crowd that had surrounded the fallen skaters, moved out of the way, as the girls bore down upon the imaginary line that marked the end of the race. Bent far down, her arms swinging like well regulated pistons, Viola was in the lead, a good three yards separating her

from her nearest antagonist, Mildred Evans, while almost an equal distance behind Mildred, the rest of the girls were bunched.

His disappointment over his fall forgotten in the thought that Longback had snatched victory from the boy to whom he had taken such a dislike, Elmer cried:

"Look out for that crack in the ice, Viola, or you'll get tripped just as I did."

Although the girl heard the warning, she gave no evidence, either by thanks or by action, and could the richest boy of Rivertown High School have known what was passing in her mind, he would have worn anything but the pleased smile that enveloped his face.

So long as Harry had been in the lead, Viola had exerted herself to the utmost to leave the girls with whom she was racing as far behind as she could. With a little gasp of dismay, she had seen Snooks' desperate but futile attempt to foul Harry, and when the boy had jumped over Elmer, she had been one of those who had shouted their delight, and corresponding was her disappointment when Harry himself fell, and Longback won.

"I'll not be queen to Longback's king!" exclaimed the proud girl, indignantly, yet, aware as she was of the lead she had over the others in the race, she was puzzled to know how she could

manage to lose it without her purpose being too evident.

When she heard Elmer's warning, however, she realized that there was a crack in the ice which would throw her. Quickly she formed her plans, and, with almost imperceptible slackening in her speed, she began to search the ice for the crevice.

For several seconds she was unable to discern it; then of a sudden her glance fell upon a zigzag depression, and she changed her course, though ever so slightly, that she might be the more sure to strike it.

"Look out! Look out! Keep away from that edge of the bank!" shouted Elmer and several of his companions. But as unheeding as before, the girl kept on, appeared to stagger a moment as she struck the depression, and then sank to the ice.

First, in blank dismay, and then in anger, the rich boy who had seemed to be the favored one among Viola's friends stared at her, and finally, with a mumbled exclamation, skated toward her.

"You did that on purpose!" he snarled, as, stooping over, he took hold of Viola's arm to assist her to her feet.

At the words, the blood flushed hotly to the girl's cheeks and indignantly she wrenched her arm from Elmer's grasp.

"How dare you say such a thing to me, Elmer Craven!" she exclaimed angrily. "Even if I have sprained my ankle, I am quite capable of getting up by myself," and forthwith she proceeded so to do.

In the excitement caused by Viola's fall, coming as it did after the two leaders in the boys' race had been put out of the running by similar accidents, those who had been watching the girls' race were too absorbed in their efforts to urge on their favorites, now that all had practically an even chance of winning, for, in her endeavor not to meet a similar mishap to Viola, Mildred had skated so far to one side that she had lost the lead, so that none of them had seen the trick save Nettie and Harry.

Both of them, however, were too far away to hear what passed between the boy and girl, but as Nettie saw her chum limp when she tried to skate after picking herself up, she gave up the race and went to her assistance.

"What is it? Have you hurt yourself?" she asked, solicitously.

"It's my ankle. I'm afraid I've sprained it."

"Really?"

"Don't be a goose."

A moment the girl gazed at her chum and then the light of understanding coming to her, she exclaimed, significantly:

"Oh!" And the better to give the semblance of truth to the supposed injury, she put her arm around Viola to support her, and led her to the bank, where she sat down on a tree stump.

In the meantime, the race had been won by Annabel Hutchins, who was known among her classmates as the infant prodigy, because being precociously bright, she had entered the freshman class when she was only thirteen years old.

For a moment after the tall, awkward girl skated across the line in the lead of the others, there was a silence. And then, as the humor of the situation dawned upon the others, for Longback, a member of the senior class, had the proper contempt for the under classmen, the boys and girls yelled and cheered frantically.

"This will be some coronation!" cried Socker, with a grin. But some of the girl's, noting Annabel's embarassment, prevented any more such remarks by surrounding her and skating her to the brush-pile. Then quickly seizing some of the dried branches, they started down the river with them toward the spot where the bonfire was to be built.

The boys, however, especially the freshmen, found it too great an opportunity to tease the haughty senior, and they made his life so miserable with their comment that in a rage he skated away by himself.

CHAPTER VII

THE RIVALRY BETWEEN HARRY AND ELMER

THEIR victim, having thus put himself beyond their torment, the other boys turned to the brush-pile, and each taking as many branches as he could carry skated down the river.

Viola and Nettie were still on the stump, and only Paul, Jerry and Harry were left at the brush-pile.

"You don't suppose Miss Darrow hurt herself so badly she can't skate back, do you?" asked Harry of his companions.

"Jove! I hadn't thought of that," returned Paul, and skating over to where the two girls were, he asked concerning the extent of Viola's injuries.

"She's hurt her ankle," explained Nettie.

"My! that's bad. Can you skate on it at all?" inquired Paul.

"I can't skate on it, but I may be able to step on it," dissembled Viola, and getting to her feet, started to walk, only to sink down with a litle cry of well-feigned pain.

"Jerry and Harry, come over here! Viola's hurt her ankle, and we've got to get her back down the river some way," called Paul to his chums.

"Remember we haven't met Mr. Watson!" exclaimed Nettie in a low voice, as the two boys left the brush-pile and skated toward them.

"Why, I'm glad you reminded me. I'd forgotten," murmured Paul, and when the new student joined them, he was quickly introduced.

"We'll have to go down the river and get a sled for you, Viola," announced Jerry. "You wait here with Nettie and Paul, and Harry and I'll go down."

But after their manœuvring to meet Harry the two girls did not propose to lose his companionship so quickly, and Viola hurriedly exclaimed:

"I think perhaps if you boys will help me, I shall be able to walk down."

"But that will only make your ankle worse, Miss Darrow," declared Harry. "I have it. We'll take a big pile of the brush and you and Miss Masterson can sit on it and we will pull you down the river."

"The very thing!" cried the other boys, and without more ado, they returned to the heap of dried branches, picked out several big ones, which they placed on the ice, heaping smaller ones across them, until they had made a rustic nest.

into which the girls climbed, while the boys, with pieces of rope which they had found and with their skate straps, bound the heavy limbs together and made a leash by which they could pull the improvised sled.

But not without difficulty did the strange method of transportation advance. First some of the heavy limbs spread, letting the twigs and girls down onto the ice and frequently were they spilled from their nest, but all enjoyed it and with much laughter and merry chatter they approached the spot where the others were stacking the brush which was to be set on fire in the evening.

"My eye! Look what's coming!" shouted Misery Jones, as he espied Viola and the others.

At his cry the rest of the boys and girls followed the direction of his gaze, and when they beheld the moving brush-heap with its two passengers, they shouted and laughed as they skated up to meet them.

"*Ach! die liebliche Schnee-fogeln!*" exclaimed Prof. Schmidt, laughing as he caught sight of the two pretty girls on the brush-pile. "Too bad it iss dat wir de coronation not now can have?"

As he heard the words, Longback took a hasty glance over the crowd assembled near the brush-pile, and not seeing Annabel, exclaimed:

"That's a good idea, Professor. It's getting

so dark that we can have the bonfire now just as well as later."

Oh, no you don't!" cried Misery. "You can't get out of the formal ceremony by one got up on the spur of the moment. The real queen who won the race, you know, might object and cause you domestic unhappiness. Even kings are allowed only one queen."

The result of the boy's protest was a lunge from Longback's hockey stick, from which he was able to dodge back in the very nick-of-time.

But the haughty senior was not allowed to get away with his caddish suggestion with only Misery's reproof.

"Now look here, Sam Dalton! No matter if Annabel Hutchins is a freshy she won the race, and she's going to be crowned queen when you're crowned king!" exclaimed several of the older girls, gathering about Longback. "You wouldn't have made any objection, you know, if it had been Viola, or even Nettie, and they're only freshmen, too; so if you don't want to regret it all the rest of the time you're in Rivertown High School, you'll be just as nice to Annabel as you possibly can be. The poor child went home crying because she thought we were all laughing at her."

"If it's going to make so much trouble, what's the use of having the mock ceremony at all?"

exclaimed Elmer, seeking to come to the aid of his chum.

"That's it! Be a spoil sport!" cried several of the boys and girls.

"Then I'll resign my honor in favor of any of you who desire it," growled Longback.

"Let's not have the bonfire at all," exclaimed Viola, flashing a look of contempt at the senior. "Instead let's go on a hay ride to Cardell—I'm sure I can have the horses."

"Good! We'll take along Nettie's and Socker's mothers and then we can have a dance at the Lake House!" exclaimed Paul.

The suggestion met with instant approval.

"Let's have a great big sleigh-ride," Socker exclaimed. "I guess father will let me take our horses, too, and we can fix up with hay, and it will be a great lark."

"You all can do as you please," declared Viola, "but I want Jerry and Paul and Nettie and Mildred and Sally and Elise and Dorothy and Mr. Watson and Misery and Jack and Horace and Annabel to be members of my party."

Readily the boys and girls accepted, and their hostess requested them to gather at her house at eight o'clock. The omission of Elmer, Longback and Socker from her guests caused looks of amazement to be exchanged between the other

boys and girls, while the three fellows themselves blushed.

"I'll take the rest of our gang!" Socker exclaimed. "We'll go up to Cardell, anyhow, and have a dance, and Viola, if you want to bring your little friends, we should be very pleased to see both you and them."

"Will everybody whom I've invited go?" asked the proud girl, ignoring the remark.

One after another they accepted until it came to Harry, and he said, mindful of what his aunt had told him:

"I thank you very much, Miss Darrow. I should like to go, but I'm afraid it will be necessary for me to stay at home and study."

"Wow! Wow! Listen to that!" moaned Misery. "On top of saving the kids and beating Pud's hockey team, he's a grind!" and skating over to the new student, he felt of his shoulders, murmuring "It's just as I thought. I can feel his wings sprouting. My, won't Rivertown get a reputation when people know we've got an angel among the freshies."

"Well, if he stays in school until he's a senior, there won't be any angel left about him," laughed Jerry. "Come on, Harry, you can go just as well as not. The only thing we have to-morrow, beside drawing and rhetoric, is Latin, and Old Grouch Plummer always flunks everybody in that,

so it isn't worth while to study the lesson. Besides, we want to initiate you into the delights of the dancing floor at the Lake House, it's——"

"Perhaps he doesn't dance," sneered Elmer. "I've always heard that a lot of people down at Laurenceburgh were opposed to dancing, and maybe Watson's family is among them."

This utterly uncalled-for slur made even the rich boy's chums look at him in amazement, but though Harry flushed hotly, the darkness concealed his confusion, and he replied in a steady voice:

"I'm very fond of dancing, but really, Miss Darrow, I must decline your invitation." And quickly wishing his friends among the boys and girls "good-night," he skated over to the bank, took off the ice-runners, and went home.

CHAPTER VIII

PAUL'S PARTY

THE real reason for Harry's declination of the invitation to form one of the merry party, was the fact that he knew there would be necessarily some expense attached to ,the dance, and his circumstances were such that he was obliged to watch his money carefully. Indeed, it had only been at a distinct personal sacrifice that his father had been able to arrange for the boy to go to Rivertown High School. Aware of this fact, he realized that it would not be right for him to start out by associating with those whose parents were in a position to give them liberal allowances for spending money.

For a few moments after Harry's abrupt departure there was a silence among the boys and girls who were planning the sleighing party and dance.

"There's no use in allowing a new freshy to interfere with our fun," Socker exclaimed.

"Who's going and who isn't? I want to know, so that I can get the horses and the sled and the hay ready."

The others sided in with this view of the matter, and arrangements for meeting were quickly made, after which the boys and girls separated, going to their respective homes.

"Don't you think that was queer in Harry Watson to decline your invitation, Viola?" asked Nettie, as they walked along.

Before the girl could answer, however, a voice behind them exclaimed:

"He hasn't got money enough to go, or to do anything the rest of us can. Father says he knows Watson's father and that he's poorer than a church mouse."

Surprised to think their conversation had been overheard, the girls turned quickly and beheld Pud Snooks.

"Well, if that's the real reason Mr. Watson declined to go with us, it's nothing to be ashamed of. I'm sure it's better not to go than to sponge on some of the boys who have money," sniffed Viola. At this taunt, which was particularly stinging for the reason that, although the bully's father had plenty of money, he gave his son very little to spend, with the result that he was always taking part in the pastimes of his schoolmates,

and forcing his companions to pay his share, Snooks growled to himself and slunk away.

For several minutes the two girls walked along in silence.

"Well, if it is true that Harry Watson won't be able to go to our dances and things, I'm going to be all the nicer to him at school and on the ice, because I like him. Honestly, I do, Nettie," said Viola.

This frank avowal surprised her chum, but she discreetly kept the fact to herself, and it was not long before the unpleasant incident on the ice was forgotten.

But it had made a deep impression upon Harry and, when he arrived at the comfortable home of his aunt he was very serious, returning her greeting almost curtly.

Realizing that something was amiss with the boy, yet knowing well that should she question him about it, she would but add to his reticence, the aunt wisely held her peace, trusting that during the evening he would let her know what the trouble was, of his own accord.

The boy, however, came to the conclusion that the problem which confronted him was one that he alone could work out; and, during supper, he forestalled any possible inquiries on the part of his aunt by relating to her the incidents of the

hockey game, and then the races to the brush-pile.

No sooner was the meal finished, however, than he betook himself to his room on the plea that he wished to unpack his trunk, and he was soon busily engaged in so doing, at the same time revolving plans in his mind by which he could either win the good will of the boys who had taken such an evident dislike to him, or else manage in some way to get the best of them so effectually that, for the future, they would not seek to annoy him.

"I thought you were going to grind out your Latin," cried a voice, presently.

"Why, hello, Paul! I thought you were going on the sleigh-ride!" returned Harry.

"None of our crowd are going, because Mrs. Masterson wasn't able to chaperone us to-night. Instead we are going to have a candy-pull over at my house, and I came over to get you. So put your duds on and come along."

At first our hero thought of refusing, then he reconsidered his idea, and accompanied the fellow who was later to be his most intimate chum to his home, where he found all the boys and girls who were to have been members of Viola's sleighing party, even to Annabel; and pleasant, indeed, was the evening which he passed.

As they bade Paul's mother and the boy good

night and went out on the piazza, Mildred suddenly cried:

"Oh, look at that red spot in the sky!"

Instantly the others turned in the direction towards which the girl was gazing.

"It's a fire!" exclaimed Misery. "It's a bad night for one, too, with the wind blowing, and it's so cold it will be hard to get any water."

"Where is it? Why doesn't someone give the alarm?" exclaimed several of the boys and girls.

"It's over toward the bluff leading up to the school."

"Perhaps it's only a manifestation of the aurora borealis!" exclaimed Annabel.

"That sounds fine, Annabel, but I guess I know a fire when I see one," returned Misery.

"But it's just as likely to be the aurora as it is a fire," protested Mildred.

"No, it isn't either," retorted Misery. "It's a bad night, and fires always come on bad nights."

The excited voices attracted the attention of Paul's father, and as the gentleman made his way to the front door, several of them turned to him.

"Is that a fire, Mr. Martin?" they asked.

Ere the old gentleman could reply, however, all doubt was put at rest by the shout of "Fire!" followed almost immediately by the ringing of the church bell.

Mr. Martin's house was situated on the main street, and as the members of the volunteer fire company rushed by to get the hand engine, Paul's father called out:

"Where is it, boys?"

"It's Jed Brown's house," came the answer.

CHAPTER IX

THE FALSE CHARGE

A FIRE in a small country village, always a dread catastrophe, is much more serious in the Winter, especially when any wind is stirring; and in the realization of these facts, the street was soon alive with men and women hurrying to the scene of the conflagration.

When they learned, however, that it was the home of the crippled veteran, many of them turned back.

All Paul's friends, together with his father, had started towards the scene, as soon as they knew where the fire was; and as Mr. Martin met several men whom he knew, returning, he asked:

"Where are you going? Is the fire out, or what?"

"Oh, it's nothing but old Jed Brown's shanty," retorted one of them.

"That doesn't make any difference. You ought to be willing to help Jed as quickly as any

one else. Besides, there's quite a wind, and if we don't check the blaze, it may spread. Now turn around and come back with me."

As Mr. Martin was a person of importance and influence in Rivertown, the men whom he had stopped and ordered to go back quickly obeyed.

When they arrived at the head of the street whence they could see the veteran's little house, they all realized that it would be impossible to save it, for, though it had been a short fifteen minutes since the alarm had been sounded, the house was a seething mass of flames.

Frantically men were working with shovels, throwing the snow which they scooped up onto the leaping tongues of fire, but without any result.

Rising high into the air, the sparks were borne in all directions, and when an unusually strong gust of wind swirled down the bluff, the burning brands were carried from the doomed house.

"Where are the boys with the hand engine?" demanded Mr. Martin, when no sight or sound was there of the volunteer fire department. "Aren't they coming?"

"They're stuck. One of the runners on the front bob gave in," informed a man who had just joined the constantly-increasing fringe of men and women whose figures stood out in prominent silhouette against the lurid flames.

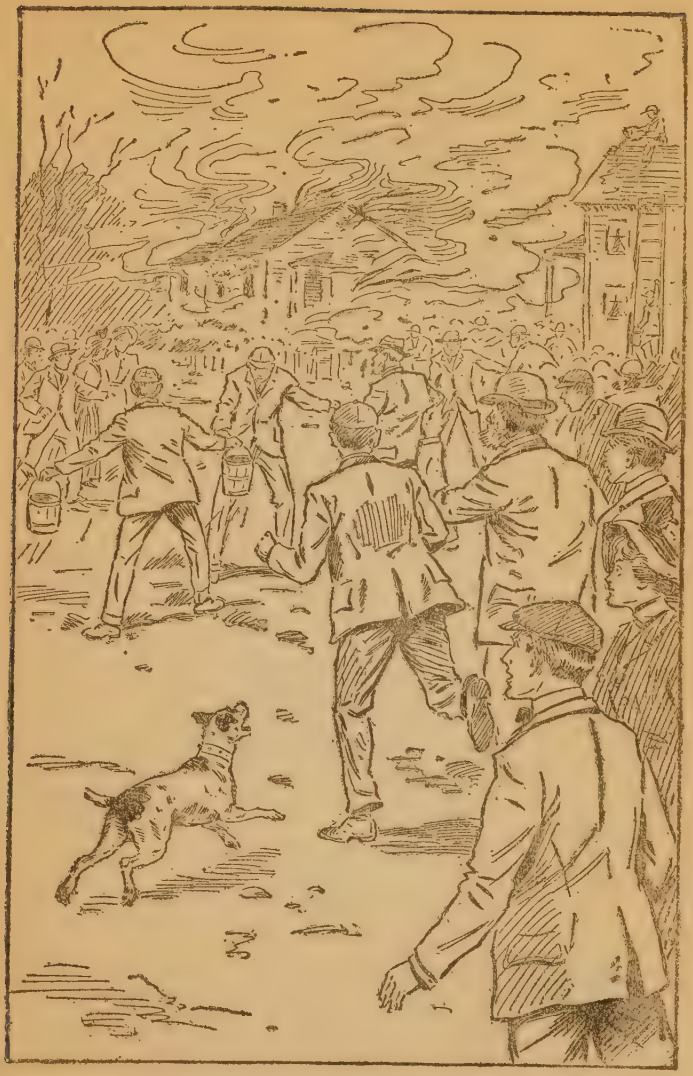
"Then we must get busy and form bucket brigades to wet down the roofs of those two houses right alongside!" exclaimed Mr. Martin, pointing to two large white residences, one of which was about one hundred feet from the burning house, and the other almost directly across the not over-wide street.

"Come on, men! If those houses catch, the fire will sweep right through the town! A quarter of an hour's work now will save them; but if we wait very long it will be too late."

Aroused by the words of the town Nestor, the men and boys lost no time in rushing to each of the residences; and while some of them went into the kitchens and manned the pumps, others formed a line to pass the pails, which were contributed by everybody; while others of the men who had placed ladders against the eaves, mounted the roof, where they sat astraddle of the ridgepole, dousing the embers which were falling on the roofs with greater frequency.

Suddenly, the rumor spread among those still watching the fire that the crippled veteran was in his house.

Hysterical women wrung their hands and begged the men to rush into the flames and rescue the helpless man. Such an act, however, would have been the height of folly, and none of them made the attempt, knowing full well that were he



OTHERS FORMED A LINE TO PASS THE PAILS.

inside he would have met his death long before.

The rumor, however, was dispelled almost as quickly as it had started.

"Ha! Old Jed ain't in the house! I seen him sneaking off down the street just as soon as the fire was going well," exclaimed Pud.

"How long was that before the alarm was given?" demanded several of the men, who had heard the statement of the butcher's son.

"Oh, five or ten minutes, I should say. It seems funny to me that the house should burn so quickly; and then I should have thought Jed would have wanted to stay and watch it," added Pud.

Had the boy known, however, the purpose for which the old veteran had gone down the street, he would have been less active in trying to sow the seeds of suspicion among those who were in earshot of him. But in his ignorance he continued to make statements that would cast suspicion upon the old man.

"When I first seen the fire, I thought I smelled kerosene."

"So did I," chorused several others.

This mention of the fact that they had noted the odor of the combustible oil immediately started the tongues of the women gossips to wagging; and gathering into little groups, they began to talk

over with one another the reasons the crippled veteran would have for burning up his home.

The bully, however, had not finished his sensational statements. No sooner had he seen that his sowing of the seed of suspicion had found ready soil, than he added to his previous effect by saying:

"After I seen Jed and smelled the kerosene, I went down around behind the house and seen a fellow running. Seeing he was headed toward the village I cut around back and followed him while he walked up Kenosha street—and who do you think it was?"

The highly excitable minds of the women and the village gossips had been worked to concert pitch by the bully, and as he paused dramatically after his story, they cried:

"Who? Tell us, quick!"

Looking round from one to another of the score of people who had gathered about him, the bully exclaimed:

"It was Harry Watson, the boy that's come to live here!"

CHAPTER X

HARRY IS EXONERATED

UNFORTUNATELY for Harry, he and his boy and girl friends who had been at the Martins' house during the evening were all scattered between the two houses where the bucket brigades were working, and no one was there to speak a good word for him in contradiction of Snooks' most despicable charge, for his manner as he spoke gave no room to doubt that he believed the new student had fired the building.

The others quickly put this interpretation upon his statement, and with the rapidity only to be found in villages, word spread about that Harry, for some fancied spite, had burned up the home of the crippled veteran.

And as the story was repeated, it lost nothing in the telling.

"Why doesn't someone go swear out a warrant for the boy's arrest?" demanded a particularly irascible old woman.

"You can't do it, Mirandy, unless you got

some reason for making the charge, and you didn't see the boy," returned one of the men.

"But Pud Snooks seen him. He can swear out a warrant!" exclaimed the spinster. "It ought to be done. There won't be nobody safe in the village with that boy liable to burn us all up at any time."

The words caused alarm among several of the women, who gathered about the old gossip, and they began to demand that action be taken; but when some of the men finally started to look for the bully who had spread the wicked report, he was nowhere to be seen.

The gossips, however, interpreted Snooks' absence to their own ends.

"Some of the men have probably taken him up to Squire Baxter's," said Miranda, and others who had heard her words instantly gave the irresponsible old spinster's remark the stamp of authority. declaring that Harry's arrest was but the question of a few minutes.

In the meanwhile, the fire having burnt itself out on Jed Brown's house, and the danger to the neighboring mansions being thereby over, the members of the bucket brigade made their way once more to the scene of the conflagration.

With Mr. Martin on one side, and his son Paul on the other, Harry approached the ruin.

"There he comes! There he comes! Luther

Martin has the little sneak! He knows what to do with him!" snapped Miranda.

And in whispers, low but none the less audible, the word quickly ran around the circle of gossips that the village Nestor was holding the youthful fire-bug until the proper authorities could take him into custody. So curious were the glances cast at them by the rest of the people, that Mr. Martin could not help but notice them, and, wondering at their cause, he turned to the man nearest him, calling him by name, and asked:

"What is the matter, Zeke? Why is everybody whispering and looking at me?"

"'Tain't you they're looking at," returned the man, in a voice as solemn as though he were chief mourner at a funeral.

"Then who is it?"

"Harry Watson."

"What about him?"

"You know as well as I do."

Too familiar with his neighbors not to know that something of unusual seriousness was afoot, Mr. Martin laid his hand heavily upon Zeke's shoulder.

"I want you to tell me what people are saying about Harry Watson, and what all this mysterious whispering means?" declaired the patriarchal man in stern tones.

Realizing that it would be folly to try to de-

ceive the village Nestor, Zeke looked uneasily about him, then cleared his throat, preparatory to speaking.

"Well, it's this way, Luther," he began in a whining voice. "They are saying as how you're holding Harry Watson until the constable can come and arrest him."

Both Paul and the boy against whom the breath of suspicion had been directed could not help but hear what passed between Mr. Martin and the man with whom he was talking, and as the latter explained the action of the rest of the spectators, Harry staggered back as though he had been struck a blow in the face.

"Arrest me!" he exclaimed. "What for?"

"You know," declared Zeke in a mournful voice.

"Nonsense, Zeke. Nobody's going to arrest Harry Watson any more than they are me," interrupted Mr. Martin. "And now if you'll just get over your desire to create a mystery and tell me what this is all about, I'll quickly settle it—and if you don't, I'll ask somebody who can tell me the plain facts without any trimmings."

Fond as he was of beating about the bush and giving vague hints and meaning glances, rather than a plain statement of facts, Zeke, however, did not wish to be deprived of exploding the bomb.

"Pud Snooks says he seen young Watson running away from the fire, and he and a lot of us smelled kerosene just as the blaze started, and Mirandy and the rest of us has been saying that there won't be any house safe in Rivertown until that boy is fast behind lock and key."

His son having told him during supper the trick the bully had tried to play on Harry which had come so near to resulting in the death of the little children; also about the new student's preventing Pud from snow-balling the crippled veteran, and his attempt to foul the boy during the race on the river, Mr. Martin readily realized the story was but the emanation of the bully's brain.

Raising his voice so that it could be heard by all within a radius of fifty feet, the village Nestor exclaimed:

"That's utter nonsense, Zeke. Harry Watson is a good boy. He comes from an honorable family, and there's no more reason for accusing him of setting Jed Brown's place afire than there is of accusing me!" Then the patriarchal man paused a few moments to allow the murmurs of surprise to subside before he added in a still louder voice than at first, for the greater effect:

"Besides, Harry Watson has been at my house all the evening, and came to the fire together with my boy, Paul, several of his friends, and myself."

"But Pud said he seen him!" declared several people, evidently unwilling to accept Mr. Martin's words.

"Where is Pud?" demanded the village Nestor. "I——"

"Yes, where is Pud Snooks? I want to talk to him!" exclaimed a shrill voice, interrupting.

Turning at the sound, the men and women beheld the bent and bowed form of old Jed Brown.

Instantly, there was a babel of talk and exclamations at this unexpected turn in affairs.

"What do you want to see him for?" demanded one of the men.

"I want to see him to ask him what he was doing in my shed just before I caught him coming out."

At the words, several of the men and women crowded about the crippled veteran, plying him with questions; but with a wave of his hand, Mr. Martin silenced them.

"This is a very serious statement, Jed," he exclaimed in a stern voice. "I warn you that you must be careful what you say. Now tell me just what happened, and how you discovered the fire."

As they heard the words, those of the men and women who were still at the scene, formed a circle about the village patriarch and the crippled veteran, necks craned forward, ears cocked,

that they might not lose a syllable of anything that was said.

"I was just getting ready to go to bed when I heard a noise out in the shed," declared Jed. "For some time I've been missing tools, and so I picked up a club I had by the kitchen stove, and started out to see what the trouble was.

"I s'pose I made some noise, for just as I had stepped out of the kitchen door, somebody ran out from the shed and tried to pass me.

"'Who is it?' I cried. But instead of answering me, the person swung at me and caught me in the shoulder with a blow that would have knocked me down had I not thrown my arms about him and hung on."

As he made this statement, the crippled veteran paused. For several moments his auditors waited, thinking he would continue, but when he did not several of them asked:

"Did you see who it was?" "Could you get a look at his face?"

"Yes."

"Who was it?"

"Pud Snooks!"

At the pronouncement of the bully's name, cries of astonishment arose from the circle of men and women.

"Why didn't you hold onto him?" demanded Mr. Martin.

"Because he shook me off."

"Then what did you do?"

"I started after him—and I hadn't gone more than half way up the street before I saw flames burst from the shed."

In silence all those in the circle heard these words.

"Do you want to have the boy taken up for this, Jed?" finally asked Mr. Martin.

"No. I don't want to bring trouble to anyone, but I'm not going to have the house burnt over my head without getting some return. I want to find Pud Snooks and ask him some questions, and then I want to have a talk with his father."

"You're a sensible man, Jed," declared Mr. Martin. "Just come along with me and we will go find Pud's father. Come, Harry! Come, Paul."

Without more words Mr. Martin turned on his heel, and led the way up the street, several of the more curious among the crowd tagging at his heels.

CHAPTER XI

"OLD GROUCH"

"I DON'T believe it was Pud who set fire to Mr. Brown's house," exclaimed Harry, as they walked along.

"Don't you s'pose I know him when I see him? I have good reason to!" retorted the crippled veteran.

"What makes you think it wasn't he, Harry?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Because he was going on a sleigh ride with Socker Gales and some of the other boys and girls," returned Harry.

"But evidently he didn't go, for he was at the fire after it was burning fiercely," asserted the venerable man. Nobody knew the cause for the bully's remaining at home.

Stung deeply by the words Nettie had uttered when he had come up behind them when the two girls were walking home, Snooks had asked his father for some money that he might join his friends in driving to the Lake House at Cardell for the dance, only to be gruffly refused.

Angry at his father, his friends and himself, the bully had eaten his supper in sullen hastiness, and then left the house by the back way for the purpose of watching his friends depart on the sleigh ride. The route he took, however, led him past the house of the crippled veteran whom he hated so deeply, and the sight of it suggested to him that he might work off his ill-humor by playing some trick on old Jed.

Entering the shed, he lighted a match and was looking about the shop, when he had heard the crippled veteran opening the door of the kitchen, and, thinking only that he must escape, the boy had thrown the match on the floor and rushed to leave the shed. Instead of going out, the match had fallen into a pile of shavings, quickly igniting them, and the flames found ready food in the pieces of wood, oil-soaked leather and other odds and ends with which the shop was littered, and in a few moments had gained such headway that they were irresistible.

Such was the story which Mr. Martin and the bully's father extorted from the boy after they had questioned him closely in the presence of the crippled veteran for a half hour.

Though the fire was purely an accident, it was so evident that Pud had gone to his arch-enemy's house bent on mischief, that the butcher and Mr. Martin were at a loss how to proceed in the mat-

ter of meting out punishment; and as they sat in silence, pondering over the confession, it was Jed himself who solved the problem.

"Well, I'm glad you didn't come to the house with the intention of burning it, Pud," he exclaimed. "You and I know I hadn't occasion for being fond of you, but I'd hate to think there was any boy, or man either for that matter, in Rivertown who was so down on me that he would want to burn the roof over my head.

"Now, I've carried a bit of insurance on the place and I'm not going to live very much longer, so if——"

"Jed, I ain't liked you no better than my boy," interrupted the butcher, "but you've been so decent, and not asked me to punish Pud or send him away where they'll take care of him, that if it's agreeable to you I'll give you two hundred and fifty dollars. Pud, go get my check book."

"No need to bother about that to-night, Snooks. You can give me the money to-morrow," declared Jed. And with this understanding Mr. Martin and the crippled veteran took their departure.

Once they were outside, the village patriarch seized the hand of the crippled veteran and shook it heartily.

"Jed, you certainly are a man!" he exclaimed, feelingly. "But where will you go to live, now?"

Ere the old man could answer, Harry and Paul, who had been waiting outside the house, joined them just in time to hear Mr. Martin ask this question.

"If you'd care to, I should like to have you come around to our house!" exclaimed Harry. "I know Aunt Mary would like it, and then as you're an old friend of dad's he'd want me to ask you."

"That would be just the thing," asserted Mr. Martin, "and I don't doubt but that you can make arrangements to live at her house with Mary as long as you care to stay in Rivertown. I'll go and explain things."

Surprised at first, after the incidents of the evening had been made clear to her, Mrs. Watson readily agreed to board the veteran as long as he cared to remain; and after bidding them all a cordial good-night, Mr. Martin and Paul went to their home.

Many were the glances that were cast at the bully and Harry when they appeared at the high school the following day, but no one had the temerity to speak to them about the incident of the fire, although there were many whispered conversations held in which the sympathy was entirely with the new student.

As Paul had said, the only lesson of importance the freshman class were called upon to attend

was the Latin, of which the crusty old Prof. Isaac Plummer, often called "Grouch" by the students, was instructor.

As the boys and girls filed into the classroom, the professor, who was a little squat man, with a scrubby beard, so thin that one of the girls had said it was really an individual beard, glanced at them over the tops of his spectacles.

"There's no use asking any of you, I suppose, whether you have your lesson or not," he snapped, in a high-pitched, jerky voice. "The fire last night would have been a sufficient excuse, I suppose, even if it wasn't for the fact that you never do have your lesson anyway."

Then, his eyes resting on Harry, he exclaimed:

"What are you doing in here?"

"I came to recite, sir."

"Listen, the rest of you. Here's a boy who has come to recite. Do you, by any chance, happen to be a member of the Rivertown High School, or have you just dropped in like manna sent from Heaven to show the rest of these young idiots that it is possible for a child to know its Latin lesson? What's your name?"

"Harry Watson," stammered the boy, his face scarlet at the brusqueness of the Latin instructor's greeting.

"Where do you come from?"

"Lawrenceburgh, sir."

"Do you like Latin?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that explains it. I don't wonder you left Lawrenceburgh. No man who cared for Latin would ever live there, let alone learn it in any of their schools. How far have you gone in Caesar?"

"Through the first two books."

"Indeed! I didn't suppose anyone ever got beyond the grammar in Lawrenceburgh. Suppose you start in at the beginning of the second book, which is our lesson to-day, and read as far as you can."

During this tirade many were the nudges in which the boys and girls indulged themselves; and Elmer and Pud had revelled in it, gleefully, believing that they were about to witness the discomfiture of the boy for whom they had conceived such a dislike.

But Harry was fond of Latin and was also well grounded in his fundamentals. Opening his book at the part indicated, he began to translate, and Prof. Plummer allowed him to finish two sections before he began to ask him questions on construction. But though he tried his best to confuse the boy, Harry did not get rattled, and acquitted himself creditably.

"Watson, I want you to come up here," the instructor exclaimed, when he had finished

"Let me shake hands with you. I'm glad to know there is one scholar in Rivertown High School who has even the faintest conception of the Latin fundamentals."

Blushing even more furiously than he had while he was being baited, Harry stood in his place uncertain whether the professor meant what he said or not, and hoping in his heart that he did not.

"Ah, you hesitate, I see," grinned Prof. Plummer, sardonically. "After you know me better you will know I never mean what I say. Never to my knowledge have I willingly had one of the pupils of Rivertown High School approach any nearer than you are now. Kindly remember that."

And after calling upon one after another of the members of the class only to have them answer "Not prepared," old Grouch dismissed the class in disgust.

CHAPTER XII

PLEDGED TO THE PI ETAS

ALTHOUGH the majority of the scholars in the Rivertown High School lived in Rivertown, there were a goodly number who came from adjacent villages, and for the benefit of these, as well as to give a greater school life to those who lived at home, the trustees of the high school had sanctioned the use of several halls as society rooms.

Thus the girls had two for their exclusive use, the Gamma Gammas and the Lambda Nus; and the boys three, the Kappa Phis, the senior society, the Psi Mus, to which only juniors were eligible, and the Pi Etas, nicknamed the Pie Eaters by the upper classmen, composed chiefly of sophomores, although such of the freshmen as were not too crude were admitted to membership.

For several days after Harry's encounter with the Latin professor, he was discussed by the boys at the head of the Pi Etas, and, after deciding that he was eligible, the members began to

rush him, inviting him around to the club room, to their homes, their skating and dancing parties.

Elmer and Socker, as well as Paul and Jerry, belonged to the Greek letter society, and the proposal to take Harry into the folds of the Pi Eta met with a vigorous opposition from the former pair. Sufficient were there of the sophs, however, who believed that, with a little rubbing off of the rough edges, Harry would be a desirable member of their crowd, to out-vote them, and in due course a committee was selected to pledge him.

But when Harry was approached, he exhibited no great enthusiasm. Fortunately, however, Paul and Jerry were members of the committee and, after the full body had sounded him, they remained at his aunt's house with him.

"What's wrong? Don't you like the crowd?" asked Jerry.

"You bet I do! It isn't that." And then our hero paused, blushing, finally continuing:

"I might as well tell you fellows, because it will save a lot of unpleasantness for me. I can't afford to do the things the rest of you fellows can."

At this frank announcement, Paul and Jerry looked at one another in dismay, for neither of them knew exactly how to answer, and moreover, it was confirmation of their belief that Harry's

refusal to go on the sleigh ride was because of his lack of funds.

As the pause that ensued after the statement became embarrassing, Jerry took the bit in his teeth.

"There's practically no expense, Harry. No initiation fees, or anything like that. All we have to do is to pay for the light and heat. The school pays the rent, that is, they say they do, though none of the rooms or halls of Rivertown societies have cost a penny, for they're given by people who own the property. My assessment, so far, this year has been seventy-five cents. You know there are fifty Pi Etas and the expenses for the rest of the year, with Spring coming before long, will be still less, and we want you to be one of the bunch,—honestly, we do. It means no end of fun next year, the Psi Mu surely for junior and the Kappa Phi for senior year."

A lot of other things Jerry and Paul told our hero, and by the time they had finished talking to him, he had fully come to the conclusion that he would get the money to pay his dues in some manner, and he signified his delight at the prospect of joining the society.

"Good boy!" chorused his chums. "Just stay in your room to-night. As your superiors in the Pi Eta we command you to."

And hitting the boy such powerful whacks on

his back that is seemed to him his teeth would fall out, Paul and Jerry left him. Descending the stairs, they bade Mrs. Watson a significantly courteous "good night" and hurried back to the society room to carry the tidings of Harry's acceptance to their waiting fellows.

With an understanding of what the call of all the boys upon her nephew meant that would have done credit to a father, Harry's aunt went to her desk, took out a sheet of paper, and wrote:

"My Dear Boy:

"I hope you find this of use, and it affords me more pleasure to be able to give it to you than it can you to receive it.

"Lovingly, Aunt Mary.

"P. S.—If anything should ever happen that you should get into a little scrape, I want you to feel that you can come to me. Tell me all about it instead of going to an outsider. I shall be able to help you."

And enclosing a five dollar bill, she put it into an envelope and biding her time until Harry came downstairs, slipped up to his room and placed it on his study table where he would be sure to find it.

Wonder as to what his instructions to remain in the house meant filled Harry with an alternat-

ing succession of vague misgiving and delight, and appreciating his mood, his aunt humored him during supper, refraining from pressing him with any awkward questions as to his unusual nervousness.

When he finished supper, Harry stayed around downstairs till he heard the sound of voices out in the street in front of the house. As they drew nearer and nearer, it became evident that they were chanting.

"Mercy! What can that be? It sounds like a funeral dirge!" exclaimed Mrs. Watson, simulating an ignorance of the familiar song by which the Pi Etas announced their descent upon a prospective victim to their initiation, though she had heard it numberless times before, when the members of the society in years gone by had passed through the street in quest of their victims.

The blood mounting to his face, Harry listened a moment, then ran up to his room, grabbed up his Caesar, dropped into a chair and vainly strove to concentrate his mind upon the text before him.

Once only in a life-time does the indescribable thrill grip the heart of a boy who realizes that he has been found fit by the most critical jury in the world, his fellow students, to become a member of one of their secret societies—and in the ecstasy of his happiness Harry never noticed that his book was upside down.

CHAPTER XIII

A SERIOUS CHARGE

As THE measured tread of the steps of the students marching in military time rang out on the porch, Harry could not restrain his feelings, and jumped to his feet, pacing excitedly up and down his room.

For moments that seemed eternal after the sound of the tramping came, he listened for the peremptory knock.

At last it came, and as it rang out, with significance the boy could never forget, his heart almost stopped beating—then he was dully aware that his aunt had gone to the door and opened it. He heard the sound of excited voices, then it seemed as though there were a mighty crash against the door of his room, in rushed several of the boys whom he knew, seized him, tossed him to their shoulders and started down the stairs, not a word having been spoken. But as he gained the outside door, the boys assembled in the yard broke into a

chant of triumph, and with the new student still borne aloft, they retraced their steps down the street, the rhythm of their song growing in its delirium until they reached their society room.

But once Harry was inside the sacred precints, guarded by the four plastered walls, he was no longer the good fellow sought by his schoolmates, but the victim of initiation—and before he had performed all the stunts which were put up to him, it was early in the morning. And when he made his way to his aunt's house, it was not the care-free boy who had been borne forth on the shoulders of his friends, but a youth, bedraggled, and with a more proper appreciation of his utter insignificance in the scheme of life.

Proud to think that her nephew had been picked out for one of the members of the secret society, Mrs. Watson sat up, with the purpose of welcoming him when he returned home. But as hour after hour went by without his appearing, after the manner of a woman, she began to fear that some harm had befallen him. Accordingly, when at last she heard his halting footsteps on the porch, she threw open the door, and greeted him fondly.

But Harry was so used up that he failed to appreciate the tenderness of the caress, and, realizing the fact, his aunt sent him to bed with

the injunction to sleep as late in the morning as he pleased.

Sore, indeed, was Harry when he awoke the next morning, but as he noted the glance cast at him by the other fellows passing on the way to school, glances in which there was a certain amount of envy, he began to forget the ache and pain, caused by the anything but gentle thumps he had received during his initiation, and by the time he had reached the school house, he was quite his natural self.

But though the boy was in exuberant spirits, it did not take him long to realize that a depression had fallen upon his society mates, and he lost no time in trying to learn the cause.

"What is it?" he asked Paul and Jerry, as they came toward him.

"It's fierce, that's what it is," returned Jerry.

"But why don't you tell me what it is?"

"Because nobody knows *exactly,*" asserted Paul.

"We'll know, though, just as soon as chapel's over," announced Jerry, in a voice so doleful, that the last vestige of Harry's enthusiasm vanished.

Not far into the school grounds had Harry and his companions proceeded, before the boy had found that the gloom shared by his society brothers was reflected in all whom he met, and

though he nodded to such of the boys and girls as he knew, when there was any response at all, it was merely perfunctory.

"Sort of a dismal morning to hand out to a new Pi Eta, what?" exclaimed Misery.

But Harry had become too imbued with the spirit of disaster to make any reply, and as he took his seat in the chapel, he was as anxious-eyed as any of the others.

The formal chapel service over, Mr. Larmore closed the Bible with decided emphasis, and then, taking off his glasses and wiping them nervously, he leaned over the little reading table and gazed at the hushed students before him.

"I'm sorry, very sorry, to tell you all that there were depredations committed last night in the physical laboratory belonging to the school.

"Several pieces of valuable experimental apparatus were destroyed.

"I believe that you all have too much understanding to make it necessary for me to dwell upon the heinousness of such acts.

"The incident, bad as it is of itself, is particularly unfortunate in view of the fact that there was, as I understand, an initiation in one of the Greek letter societies last night!"

The significance of the principal's words were so unmistakable that, as they were uttered, a gasp

of shocked surprise ran through the benches of the students.

Not one among them was there who did not know that Harry had been the boy who was initiated, and, as if drawn by an irresistible impulse, they turned their gaze upon him.

Again clearing his throat, Mr. Larmore started to speak, when a boy rose from the seats occupied by the seniors.

"My name is Thomas Dawson. You know me, Mr. Larmore. So do the other people of Rivertown and the scholars of the high school.

"I had the honor to be elected a member of the Pi Eta during my freshman year, and, in the memory of what the society stands for in scholarship and in manliness, in high ideals of school life, I resent most emphatically the imputations in your remarks cast upon the initiation into the Pi Eta society last night!"

Never before had such a defiance to the principal of the school been made, and as the boys and girls who pursued their studies within its brick walls heard it, they were seized with an amazement even greater than at the words of the principal.

But the cup of their surprise was not yet filled.

Pausing a moment after his statement, that the dramatic effect of his utterance might be the greater, Dawson exclaimed:

"In the name of the members of the Pi Eta society of Rivertown High School, I demand to know the authority for your statement that it was any of our members who caused the breaking of the apparatus?"

CHAPTER XIV

THE BOYS APPOINT A COMMITTEE

NEVER before in the annals of Rivertown High had such a scene been witnessed in the chapel, and as the scholars realized that one of their number was openly defying the man who, for years had guided the destinies of those studying under him, they were dumfounded.

Mr. Larmore, himself, evidently shared the general astonishment for, as he heard Dawson's demand, his eyes flashed, he opened his mouth as though to speak, and then, evidently thinking better of it, closed it again.

The silence enveloping the chapel was so intense that the fall of a pin would have sounded loud.

Realizing that such a situation could not be tolerated, the principal at last exclaimed:

"Dawson, I am surprised that you should assume such an attitude in this matter.

"For obvious reasons, I cannot enter into an

argument with you as to the source of my information. I will say, however, that I consider my authority reliable.

"It grieves me more than I can express to think that any of my boys should so far forget themselves in their sport as to do damage to the school's property.

"I shall go to my office directly after I have dismissed chapel, and I shall expect those boys who took part in the breaking of the apparatus to come to me and confess.

"Chapel is dismissed."

Instantly there was a hum of excited voices as the boys and girls filed from the assembly room where the chapel exercises were held.

Instead of going to their class rooms, however, the members of the Pi Eta society filed out of the school house and gathered about their leader who had challenged the principal.

"Did any Pi Eta smash the apparatus?" asked Dawson. "If he did, for the good of the society he must go to Larmore and take his medicine. I want to be sure of my facts before I take any further action."

But not a boy spoke up.

"I put you on your Pi Eta oath," announced Dawson.

But even this placing them on their most sacred

honor had no additional effect upon the society boys.

Several of the members of the other Greek letter societies gathered about the Pi Etas—for they realized that a crisis had arisen that affected all the social organizations of the school—and they wanted to plan how to meet it.

When, therefore, they learned that none of the society members had been implicated in the trouble, they cheered loudly.

"The thing to do now, is to find out who told "Princy"—which was the nickname the boys applied to the principal of the school—"that it was the work of the Pi Etas," said Dawson.

"It strikes me that the best thing to do is for some of us to go in and have a talk with him," declared Longback, when none of the boys offered any suggestion as to who the bearer of the information might be.

"Why not let the Pi Etas settle it themselves?" proposed another boy.

"Because it concerns the rest of us just as much as it concerns them—as a matter of fact I believe it concerns us more; because I'm sure that not one of the Pi Etas had anything to do with it."

"Yes, and if any of us should go into Princy's office, he and everybody else in the school, would think we had come to confess," declared Paul.

This argument proved a clincher for the plan

of sending a delegation to call on Mr. Larmore in his office, and without delay the boys expressed their preferences, the committee finally being composed of Dawson, Longback, Jerry, Harry and Misery.

The new member of the society objected to serving on the ground that it wouldn't look well for a boy who had just had the honor of coming into the Pi Eta to take such a prominent part in its affairs so soon.

"Well, you *must* come with us," returned Dawson, "and I'll tell you why. There's no use in mincing matters. Princy and all the other profs think that as part of your initiation, the rest of us either made you break the apparatus, or that you did so in a spirit of bravado."

The case having been put to him thus plainly, Harry offered no further objection to serving on the committee, and without more ado the boys who had been chosen as delegates mounted the steps preparatory to going to the office of the principal.

"What is it? School for the rest of us?" called another boy, looking about at his companions.

"No, let's cut?" cried three or four, while one of them continued:

"It will show Princy and the other Profs that we don't like the deal he's handing to us."

Readily all the members of the Greek letter societies in the school agreed to the plan, and without even so much as going into the school house for their books, they hied themselves to their respective society rooms.

CHAPTER XV

MR. LAMORE ISSUES AN ULTIMATUM

THE excitement among the rest of the scholars as to what the members of the accused society would do was intense, especially among the Greek letter girls, and little, indeed, was the attention they paid either to their books or recitations, their eyes being upon the gathering of boys.

In ignorance of what had been decided upon, when some of them beheld the five who had been chosen to wait upon Mr. Larmore, they instantly concluded that they must be the boys who had taken part in the smashing of the instruments, and quickly they passed the word along to the other students who were unable to look out of the window.

As some of the boys who had advised against sending the delegation had argued, when the knock sounded on the door of the principal's office and the order to enter had been given, Mr. Larmore believed that the five students who filed in, had come to confess.

Accordingly, assuming a stern but injured manner, he rose and bowed to each of them.

"There is no need for me to say that I am shocked when I see who of my students took part in the mischief, but I am glad that you are men enough to come to me and tell——"

"Pardon me, Mr. Larmore, but you are mistaken," interrupted Dawson. "We have not come to confess anything."

"Eh? What?" exclaimed the principal, looking over his glasses at the speaker.

"I said that we have not come to confess," repeated Dawson.

"Then to what do I owe the honor of this call?" Mr. Larmore asked, dropping back into his chair and assuming his most sarcastic tone and manner.

"In the first place, we want to tell you that no member of the Pi Eta society had a hand in the doings in the physical laboratory; and in the second, we wish to know who it was that charged us with the work."

As he heard the statement, the principal's face grew even more stern, and for several minutes he thrummed his desk without making any reply.

He had not asked the boys to sit down, and as they stood in front of him, they began to get nervous, shifting uneasily in an embarrassed sort of way from one foot to another as though un-

able to bear his gaze—and realizing how uncomfortable he was making the boys, Mr. Larmore kept silent longer than he otherwise would have.

Resenting such treatment, Dawson fidgeted with his collar, and then exclaimed:

"Will you——"

"Just a moment, please," interrrupted the principal, raising his hand to stop the boy. "I should like to know on what grounds you make your assertion that none of the Pi Etas took part in the outrage."

"Because they have told me so, sir," replied Dawson.

"Of course! How stupid of me. I should have known that did the great Tom Dawson ask who broke the apparatus, the guilty boy would have run right up to him. I made a mistake in not asking you to——"

During this ironical remark, the senior who had taken upon himself to defend the members of the under class society, grew very red.

"That's not fair, Mr. Larmore!" he exclaimed, interrupting the principal.

"Very well. Why should you expect the boys to admit their guilt to you?"

"Because I asked them under Pi Eta oath."

This reply was sufficiently illuminative to cause the principal to cast a keen glance at the spokesman.

"Do you really mean to tell me any member of that society would confess their guilt to you if you put them on their oath?"

"Yes, sir."

"And may I ask what you would have done had any of them made such a confession?"

"Sent them to you, sir."

Again did the principal look over the top of his glasses, and he realized as he never had before, what a power the Greek letter societies could be in the discipline of the school.

"But if no members of your club committed the outrage, who did?" asked Mr. Larmore finally, evidently voicing the thought that was in his mind.

"That, sir, we cannot tell you at the moment—but we will be able to later."

"How, pray?"

"Because we shall make it a point to find out, sir. And as a first step toward that end we should be obliged if you would tell us who gave you the information."

"I will do that—presently. First, however, I should like to ask you what punishment you think should be meted out to the boys who are guilty?"

"I fancy they won't be ready for punishment for some time after we find out who they are," exclaimed Longback.

Smiling at this answer to his question, Mr. Larmore exclaimed:

"I am obliged to you boys for coming to see me. I'm sorry to say, however, that I cannot accept your statements as to the innocence of the members of the Pi Eta society in regard to smashing the apparatus in the physical laboratory.

"My authority—who is no other than Tony, the janitor,—is, I believe, altogether too reliable.

"For that reason, I have decided that until I can learn who the perpetrators of the act are, to punish them individually, I shall assess the Pi Eta society the amount of the damages, which comes to seventy dollars, and until payment is made, I shall insist that the society's room be closed.

"I shall be obliged if you will act as collector for me, Dawson. You can also announce my decision to all the society members, though I shall do it in school just before the noon recess.

"And now, young gentlemen, I bid you good morning."

CHAPTER XVI

STUMBLING ACROSS A CLUE

MINGLED, indeed, were the feelings with which the boys heard this ultimatum from Mr. Larmore.

After he had dropped his sarcasm, they believed that he would at least be fair with them, and accordingly, when they heard his terms, they could scarcely believe their ears.

But they managed to control their feelings and, bowing curtly, turned on their heels and strode from the office.

Once out in the hallway they gave vent to their indignation.

"My word! Princy must have had something awful mean for breakfast to have accumulated such a grouch!" exclaimed Misery.

"But we can't blame him so much," returned Longback. "What sticks in my craw is that old Tony Farelli, who was janitor at Rivertown High when most of our fathers and mothers were students, should have laid the trouble to the Pi Etas."

"He must have some good reason for thinking it was some of us," returned Dawson, "because Tony has always been square."

"Seventy dollars is going some," declared Jerry. "It looks to me as if the Pi Eta chapter room will be closed for some time to come."

"Shall you pay it? I suppose you'll assess the members equally?" asked Harry.

"Pay it! Well, I should say not!" retorted Dawson, angrily. "Princy can nail up the door of the chapter room first!"

"Now, don't go to making any threats, Tom," interposed Longback. "The thing to do is to have a meeting of the Kappa Phis and Psi Mus to decide what shall be done."

"How about us?" demanded Jerry. "Being the victims, it seems to me we should have a little say in the matter."

"There you go again," retorted Dawson. "You freshmen never can seem to understand that it is part of your training to do as your betters tell you. Inasmuch as just about all the Kappa Phis are old Pi Eta men, you can be very sure that nothing will be decided upon that will lower the dignity of any Pie Eater."

While they were talking, the boys were standing upon the porch of the school building.

In the meantime, the principal had started on his rounds of the various rooms, immediately up-

on the departure of the student committee, and it was only a short time before he had learned that all the Greek letter men had cut their classes.

Angered at such action, Mr. Larmore was stalking back to his office, when he chanced to espy the committee members through the glass in the door.

Hastening his steps, he pushed open the inner door, yanked the knob of the outside one so that the door came open with a jerk, and faced the boys.

"Why aren't the Greek letter students at their classes, and what are you doing out here?" he demanded.

"I can only speak for myself, sir," returned Dawson. "I am out here because I'm not going to school to-day."

Only the tone in which he spoke saved the boy's speech from being grossly disrespectful, but the principal had sufficient understanding of scholars to know that it would not be well for him to press the matter farther, and without another word, he closed the door and returned to his office.

"Wow, but Princy's mad!" ejaculated Jerry. "Let's get hold of the other fellows and decide on our plan of action just as soon as we can."

This suggestion met with the approval of the other members of the committee, and forthwith they hied themselves down the hill.

As they reached the foot, they met a crowd of boys hurrying toward them.

"Princy's closed the Pi Eta room," cried several of them, as they gathered about the members of their committee.

"We know it," returned Dawson. "And what's more it will stay closed until the Pi Etas pay seventy dollars, which Mr. Larmore says is the amount of the damage done in the physical laboratory—and that, I opine, will be some time in the far distant future."

At first the other boys refused to believe this announcement, but they were quickly assured of it's authoritativeness, and when it's full significance dawned upon them they stared at one another blankly.

"I can also tell you that Princy's very sore because the Greek letter men have cut their classes."

"My word, but the prospect looks cheerful, doesn't it?" commented Socker. "Where will the Pi Eta bunch meet, now?"

"The graveyard seems the most appropriate place," asserted Misery.

"You'll have to do without your chapter room," laughed Dawson. "In the meantime, the Kappa Phis and the Psi Mus are going to have a meeting to decide what you shall do."

"That's awfully sweet of you," mocked one of

the freshmen. "I do hope you won't decide on anything that it won't be perfectly ladylike to do," and turning to his companions he exclaimed: "Come on, fellows, let's go down to the river and have a hockey game."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," countermanded Dawson, as a dozen or so of the boys started off to get their skates. "It's up to you boys to find Tony, while the rest of us are holding our consultation."

"But what's old Tony got to do with it?" chorused several of the group.

"Everything, seeing that it is he who told Princy the Pi Etas were in the laboratory," returned Longback, dryly.

"But there isn't one of us Tony wouldn't recognize—except, of course, Watson."

"That's it, exactly," asserted Dawson.

"Can Watson prove an alibi?" demanded a voice from the outside of the crowd which had been constantly increasing, as the word had passed around that the delegates had concluded their interview with the principal of the Rivertown High School.

"Who said that?" demanded Jerry, indignantly.

No one, however, made any response.

"I'll wager the fellow who said that thing is the one who broke the apparatus," declared Paul.

"Of course, I——" began Harry.

"Keep quiet! Shut up! Don't answer him! Forget it!" shouted several of the boys, effectually drowning Harry's words.

"You mustn't forget you're a Pi Eta, and that a Pi Eta is never doubted," said Jerry.

"Hear! Hear!" mocked several of the upper classmen.

"Seriously, though, you mustn't waste any more time," interposed Longback. "You noble spirited Pi Etas go find Tony, and we'll have our confab; then you may meet us in the hall in front of the Psi Mu chapter room."

The freshmen, however, did not wait to hear the last of the taunt, and breaking up into bands of two or three, they started out with the purpose of locating the janitor.

"Why not look for him at the school," suggested Harry.

"Because, this is his day to go to Lumberport," returned Jerry. "He always goes over there every Thursday to draw money for school expenses."

"Maybe he hasn't gone yet. Let's go round to his house," suggested Paul.

Quickly, the boys who were natives of Rivertown set out to guide their new chum to the house where the janitor lived; but when they arrived

they were disappointed to know that he had been gone some two hours.

"Are you the young gentlemen he was expecting to bring him money?" asked Mrs. Farelli.

"Money for what?" asked Paul, surprised.

"I don't know, sir. He just said some young men were to bring him some money and I thought it might be you, so I was going to tell you he said to take it over to Lumberport and leave it at Rector's cigar store for him, as he won't be back for a couple of days."

"Then he hasn't gone on school business, today?" exclaimed Jerry, with a rising inflection in his voice.

"No, sir."

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRIP TO LUMBERPORT

AFTER thanking the janitor's wife for her information, the boys left the house.

"Funny Tony should be going to stay away a couple of days," remarked Paul, as he walked along.

Both his companions agreed with him, but as Harry had lived in Rivertown so short a time, he was little acquainted with the habits of Farelli, and so he could offer no intelligent comment.

"It seems to me we ought to get over to Lumberport as quickly as we can," announced Jerry. "If we can locate Tony and pull the story out of him before anyone else gets to him, it will be some feather in our caps."

"It seems to me we ought to tell Dawson, and some of the other boys," declared Harry. "If there really is any crooked work they will be more likely to make the janitor tell about it than we would, I should think, considering the fact that they have been at the school four years."

To this suggestion, our hero's chums agreed,

and quickly they betook themselves to the hall in which the room of the Psi Mus was located.

"You've got a nerve to rap at our door. Didn't we tell you to wait and meet us in the hall?" demanded the boy who answered the summons.

"That's all right. We've found out something you people ought to know, so you needn't close the door in our faces," retorted Jerry.

The statement that they had important information to impart had been heard by the leaders of the two societies who were holding the consultation, and quickly they called to them to enter.

"Well, what is it that's so important?" demanded Dawson.

"We went down to see if Tony was at home," began Paul, when he was interrupted by one of the others exclaiming:

"Of course he wasn't. This is his day to go to Lumberport on school business for Princy."

"I know that," retorted Paul," but we thought perhaps he might not have started yet. When we got there, Mrs. Farelli asked us if we'd come to pay Tony some money, for if we had, he wanted us to leave it at Rector's, in Lumberport, because Tony won't be home for a couple of days."

"That's just Tony's way of trying to collect his debts quickly," commented one of the boys.

"Then why shouldn't he have told his wife to take it," asked Harry.

"And that's what he would do," interposed Dawson. "I say it won't do any harm for some of us to go over to Rector's and see what's up. In the meantime, you three boys keep your mouths closed about what Mrs. Farelli told you."

To their disappointment, none of the freshmen were invited to become members of the party that went to Lumberport, but they trailed along, nevertheless; and when they trooped into the tobacco store which the janitor had appointed as a rendezvous, they were surprised to see Elmer Craven and Pud Snooks talking with Tony.

Their amazement, however, was nothing compared to that of the two students of Rivertown High when they discovered the presence of their schoolmates.

"Didn't know you boys would dare come into a cigar store," growled Elmer, scowling.

"So that's why you selected it for your meeting place with Tony?" retorted Dawson, and then, ignoring the presence of the rich boy, the leader of the Kappa Phis turned to the janitor.

"Tony, I want you tell me which of the Pi Etas it was who broke the stuff last night?"

"It was this young man, here," returned the Italian, nodding toward Harry.

"What do you mean?" demanded the accused boy, his face blanching. "I wasn't anywhere near the schoolhouse last night. Just as soon as

the fun was over at the chapter room, I went home—and to bed."

"I can vouch for the going home part of it," declared Jerry.

"And so can I," added Paul.

"And my aunt can vouch for my being in the house," continued Harry.

"You see, Tony, you must have made a mistake, don't you?" pursued Dawson.

The charge that he had been wrong in the identification of the marauder angered the Italian and he did not hesitate to let the fact be known.

Dawson and Harry's chums, however, refused to accept the janitor's statement, and began to ply him with a series of cross questions which finally extracted the statement from him that there really was a possibility he had made an error because he was fully thirty feet away from the person he had seen in the building, and the only light he had was a lantern.

As these facts were brought out, the boys who formed the investigating committee exchanged significant glances.

But their surprise was to be still further increased.

With an unexpectedness that made them gasp, Dawson exclaimed:

"I want you to tell me, Tony, if it isn't in connection with this identification business that Pud

and Elmer came over here to pay you some money?"

Too amazed to speak, the janitor and the boys with whom he had been talking when the others entered the tobacco shop, glanced at one another.

And their action was accepted by the other boys as a tacit admission that the amazing charge made by Dawson was true.

"Well, why don't you tell me?" repeated the leader of the Kappa Phis who had been acting as spokesman.

"Because it is a matter that does not concern you," retorted the janitor.

"But you can't deny it was about this laboratory business, now, Tony, can you?" pursued his interrogator.

"I haven't been given any money by those boys," protested the janitor.

"But your wife said you were expecting some from them," declared Dawson, stretching the truth, that he might make his point more effective.

"They haven't given me a cent," whined the Italian. "They backed out!"

CHAPTER XVIII

HARRY ARRANGES FOR A SETTLEMENT

AWARE that they had been discovered in their underhand work, Pud and Elmer worked their way toward the door while Dawson was quizzing the janitor, and when they heard his statement that they had gone back on their bargain, they made a bolt to get outside. But Jerry blocked them.

"No, you'll have to stay here until this matter is settled once and for all," he exclaimed, his face growing white and his hands clenching.

Realizing that resistance was futile, the two boys slunk back from the door and awaited the further action of Dawson and his companions.

"Why not let them go?" suggested Harry. "Mr. Farelli's words and their actions have vindicated the Pi Etas, and it seems to me very poor policy to bring any scandal to Rivertown High."

"But you forget that Princy has assessed a fine of seventy dollars on the Pi Etas," protested Dawson. "While I'm perfectly willing to let the

matter drop, I see no reason why the boys who are members should be compelled to pay out money for something for which they were not responsible in any way."

Although Harry's suggestion had met with murmurs of approval from the other boys when it had been made, the senior's statement had brought back to their minds the cost of such procedure, and they were equally enthusiastic for the latter plan.

The thought that he could get himself out of a situation which had become decidedly embarrassing, since his schoolmates had discovered him in conference with the janitor and the bully of Rivertown High made Elmer come forward.

"Suppose I agree to pay the seventy dollars and let the matter rest? Is that agreeable to you fellows?" he asked.

"We ought to know how the trick was planned," declared Jerry.

"Especially as it is Harry against whom the insinuation is the most serious," added Paul.

"Oh, never mind about me," exclaimed our hero. "The only thing to be considered is what's best for the Pi Etas and for Rivertown High."

This stand of the new student appealed to the rest of the boys, and at a sign from Dawson, they withdrew to a corner of the cigar store for a conference, leaving Harry, the janitor, Snooks

and Elmer leaning against the glass showcase.

The entire proceeding had been distasteful to the janitor, who had filled his position for so many years and, believing that it would be best for him to propitiate the boy for whom the other students had taken up the cudgels, he riveted his eyes upon the new member of the Pi Etas.

"Do you know, I think I was wrong, sir, when I told Mr. Larmore that you were the boy I had seen in the building."

"You most certainly were!" returned Harry.

"Oh, well, in a time of excitement, any man is apt to be mistaken," interposed Elmer, lightly, "and so long as no harm has been done, if I am willing to pay the expense, I don't see why the matter should go any farther."

At this statement, Harry looked at the rich boy.

"So you don't think it's any harm to have such a charge made against you when you are practically unknown to the school authorities, and to the people of the town in which the school is located?" he asked.

At the question, Elmer flushed and before he could think of a reply that was adequate, Dawson and the boys with whom he had been talking, moved over towards them.

"We've decided that if Watson is willing to overlook the affront that has been put upon him, for the good of the Pi Etas and Rivertown High,

we will allow you to pay the seventy dollars, Craven, and let the matter drop."

"Very well, I will go to Mr. Larmore in the morning," announced Elmer, his relief at the solution of the difficulty evidenced by the look which settled on his face.

"No, that won't do," returned Dawson. "Mr. Larmore appointed me as collector of the assessment, and if the matter is to be arranged as you suggested, you must give the money to me. I will pay him. In that way, no one but ourselves need know of the real facts."

"But I shall need time in which to raise the money," protested Elmer.

"How long?" asked the boy who had been acting as spokesman.

"A month, I should say."

"And we're to stand for the Pi Eta society room being closed for that length of time just to accommodate you," demanded Jerry, stepping toward Elmer.

As though fearing an assault from his schoolmate, the rich boy drew back.

"Well, I might be able to get the money in two weeks," he announced.

"That won't do, either," said Dawson. "Knowing you as I do, it is my opinion that you have the money right in your pocket this minute."

"But think of the sum, seventy dollars," protested Elmer.

"Which is nothing to you, if the stories that come from Lumberport and Springtown are true," returned the senior, "and besides, I can tell from the way Snooks is acting that he has some money in his pocket."

"Now you two boys might just look the matter squarely in the face. You have deeply wronged Harry Watson—for reasons best known to yourselves. Watson is a member of the Pi Eta and a scholar in Rivertown High and is willing to overlook your actions, provided you clear the society from all odium.

"I don't mind telling you frankly that it was only because I insisted upon it that the rest of the boys who came over with me consented to such an arrangement.

"But unless you pay the money at once and to me, I shall withdraw my objections to the true state of affairs being told to Mr. Larmore—and you all know what the result of such action would be."

The tones in which the senior spoke were bitter and, fully as much as the words, they made Craven understand that he could not count upon the sympathy or support of the other Greek letter men.

And even Snooks, who had never been able to

gratify his dearest ambition of becoming a Pi Eta, felt their sting.

"I've got fifteen dollars," the bully announced. "If you have the rest let's pay it, Elmer."

This statement that the butcher's son had any money in his pocket was a distinct surprise not alone to Elmer but to the other boys, and deeming that it would make the burden upon him just so much the lighter, Craven put his hand in his pocket.

"Very well. I have fifty dollars. With Pud's fifteen that will make sixty-five. If the rest of you will raise the remaining five dollars among yourselves, I will pay it in the morning."

In his talk, Dawson had been more or less bluffing, for he had not thought that even as rich as Elmer's father was, he allowed him any such amount of money; and when he had heard the boy announce that he had fifty dollars in his pocket, he could scarcely restrain the exclamation of surprise that rose to his lips. But he managed to dissemble his feelings.

"All right. You place your money on the showcase, Elmer, and you put your's down, Pud."

Quickly, the two boys obeyed and, after verifying the count, Dawson turned to the others.

"It's up to us to make up the other five dollars. Come on, shell out?" he exclaimed.

"I have fifty cents," and producing the coin, he

laid it down on the showcase beside the other money.

The rest of the boys, however, not being accustomed to carrying money about with them, fidgeted nervously, then put their hands in their pockets, and the sum total they produced did not amount to over fifty cents more.

Enjoying their embarrassment, Elmer's face suddenly lighted.

"You fellows have driven hard terms with me, and if you can't make up the other five dollars, then I withdraw my offer to stand the brunt of the cost."

In dismay, Dawson and his friends looked at one another, but just as they were on the point of admitting they could not carry out their agreement, Harry took out an envelope from his pocket.

"I have five dollars," he announced. "And for the sake of the Pi Etas and Rivertown, I should be glad to put it into the fund."

CHAPTER XIX

UPHOLDING THE HONOR OF RIVERTOWN

EVEN Elmer and Snooks could not but appreciate the magnanimity of this offer, aware as they were of the straightened circumstances of the new student.

"Good boy!" exclaimed the others. "We'll make it up to you just as soon as we get back to Rivertown."

Such strong dislike, however, had he conceived for Harry, that Elmer could not bear the thought of being under obligations to him to the slightest extent, and with an angry movement he thrust his hand in his pocket, pulling out a five dollar bill.

"Here! Take this," he snarled at Dawson. "I was saving it out to get home on, but it doesn't amount to anything to me, and I suppose that five dollars Watson has is his spending money for the year."

The wanton brutality of the remark brought an angry flush to Harry's face, and clenching his hands, he started toward the rich youth. But with

no desire to have any trouble in the town across the river, Dawson, Paul and Jerry quickly placed themselves between the two boys, while the senior took the extra money from Elmer and wrapped it with that which he had, giving back to Harry the bill which our hero's aunt had presented to him.

At first, the new member of the Pi Eta society was disposed to resent the act.

"Don't be foolish," exclaimed Dawson. "Craven and Snooks were the ones who smashed the apparatus—I don't know exactly how—but you never would find them willing to pay a cent unless they were guilty; and it is perfectly right that Craven should pay all the money he can rake or scrape together."

At this stinging comment, Elmer opened his mouth as though he intended making a retort; but second thought showed him the futility of so doing, and buttoning up his coat, he nodded towards Snooks and left the store with the bully.

As soon as they were gone, the senior turned upon the janitor.

"Tony, I never thought to find you in such a mess as this."

With tears in his eyes, the Italian spoke to the boys:

"I didn't want to, but my little girl, she is sick, and I need some money; and so when Elmer and Pud come to me and tell me they would give me

fifty dollars if I will say Watson broke the stuff, I talked it over with my woman, and she say take it."

This confession of the janitor's, substantiating the idea which the boys had formed of the incident, together with the thought that his temptation had come from the fact that his child was ill, caused them to forego any further cross-questioning of the janitor, and they took their departure from the cigar store.

The return to Rivertown was much in the nature of an ovation for Harry, for not long was it after the committee appointed by the Greek letter societies started out than word of their purpose spread among the scholars.

With the letting out of school for the noon recess, the girls who were members of the Gamma Gammas and the Lambdu Nus learned of the action of the boys, and forthwith they decided to cut classes for the rest of the day.

Particularly caustic in their comments upon the action of the principal were Viola and Nettie; but as the older girls counselled a waiting policy, the two freshmen were prevented from doing anything that would further complicate the unfortunate case.

The action of the girls depleted the ranks of the school still further. It was with difficulty the instructors could maintain any sort of discipline

during the afternoon, and when the last session was over for the day, the boys and girls hastened down to the river, put on their skates and started across to the town of Lumberport.

Before they had reached the other side of the river, however, they met Dawson and the other boys returning, and as they saw the happy expression on their faces, their curiosity was aroused to a high pitch.

But though they plied them with questions, they were unable to extract any more satisfactory explanation from them than that the mater had been settled.

Loud were the protests at this terse announcement and the various friends of the boys who had gone across the river had drawn them aside and were striving their utmost to learn the real facts, when there was a loud shout from up the river.

Turning, the members of the Rivertown High beheld the red and white banners which were the colors of the high school at Springtown, and almost simultaneously with the recognition of the identity of the approaching crowd, they heard the artillery like rattle of the school cheer.

"What's the matter with Springtown? What's up now?" exclaimed several of the boys.

"Give them the Rivertown cheer. All together now, everybody! Act as though you were alive," shouted Dawson, and swinging his arms in lieu of

a baton he led the cheer, whose volume rolled up the river, breaking with defiance in the ears of the down-coming horde of skaters.

"The quickest way to find out what's doing is to go up to meet them," announced Jerry.

And without more ado, he and a few of the other boys started off up the river.

Massed together as though they were defenders of a town repelling a hostile attack, the other boys and girls assumed a compact mass, watching the members of their own school as they sped toward the phalanx of the neighboring town.

No sooner had they noted the movement of the leaders among the members of Rivertown High, than the Springtownians checked their advance, and after a few moment's hesitation, they sent part of their number to meet the delegation from Rivertown.

The parley between the two groups was short; then the Rivertown members turned on their skates and started back to their schoolmates at top speed.

"Springtown's come down for a race," one of the boys announced. "Shall we give it to them?"

For years the schools in the neighboring towns were rivals in all branches of athletics, and though the percentage of victories had been with the scholars at the head of the river, there never was a time when they could propose any game that the

boys and girls of Rivertown were not eager to take up the challenge.

Accordingly when the member of the high school on the bluff asked if his mates wished to accept the challenge of the Springtownians there was a mighty shout of "Yes."

"But who'll represent us?" exclaimed three or four of the seniors.

"Craven isn't in the bunch, Longback has a grouch, and Snooks is missing too," exclaimed Misery. "Why not call the boys' race off, and let Annabell represent Rivertown?"

"Now don't get funny," admonished Dawson. "There are plenty of us here who can uphold old Rivertown."

"Who?" demanded several voices.

"Jerry and Paul—and Watson," added another voice.

"How about it. You fellows want to make a try?"

"Who are we going up against?"

"The very best men in Springtown."

"Do they race fair?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"Can't you get anyone else to go against them in my place?"

"It doesn't seem so. You heard what Misery said."

This parley was interrupted by the arrival of

the advance guard of the scholars who had come down to challenge their rivals at Rivertown.

"Are you going to let us win by default?" asked one of the boys from Springtown.

"Not so you'd notice it. When it comes to count the winners, Springtown won't have a look in!" returned Dawson.

His words brought a cheer of encouragement from his schoolmates.

"Then let's get busy and start the races right away," announced the spokesman for the Springtownians.

"All right. Bring the men out. We have only three. How long is the race going to be?"

In response to this question various were the exclamations of opinion; some clamored for two miles, others asserting that one was enough. When they could come to no definite conclusion, several of the leaders from each of the schools got together to try to settle the distance.

Their attempt, however, was as unsuccessful as had been those of the scholars en masse; and finally Socker Gales exclaimed:

"Let's toss a coin!"

The suggestion met with instant approval from both of the opposing forces.

Quickly Dawson drew a coin from his pocket, balancing it on his thumb and forefinger.

"I'll toss. Springtown, you call!" he exclaimed.

High in the air he spun the coin, and as it whirled over and over, the leader of the Springtownians, shouted: "Tails!"

With a sharp click the bit of money struck the ice, and then as though driven by perverseness, it rolled some twenty feet, finally striking a depression, into which it fell.

The instant the coin had struck the ice and started on it's runaway career, the boys who had been watching the tossing, set after it; but fleet as they were, it managed to elude them and had settled in the ice crevice before they had overtaken it.

"Which is it?" called the others, as two of the Rivertown boys reached the spot.

"Heads," they replied.

"That means you lose, Springtown!" chorused the rest of the Rivertown scholars.

But the challengers from up the river refused to accept the fall of the coin as an omen.

"Which distance are you going to take?" demanded the leader of the visitors.

"Wait until I talk with the boys who are going to race," announced Dawson.

"We'll make it two miles!" he finally exclaimed, after a brief consultation.

This announcement met with varied exclamations from the Rivertown students.

"Paul and Jerry never can stand that distance in the world," shouted several of their mates.

"Never mind, that's Watson's pet race, and all we want to do is win it," declared Misery. "This isn't a meet where we have to have points to win."

But despite his confident announcement, there were many of the scholars who scoffed at the thought that the boy who had so lately come to Rivertown would be able to defeat the man who had twice won the race for Springtown.

Realizing what was in their minds, several of the seniors skated about among the Rivertown students.

"Don't sulk!" they exclaimed. "Show some life! We chose the two miles, and it's up to you people to give some support to the boys who are going to race! Don't act as though you thought we were beaten already. Come on now, rip out a cheer!"

Under the lash of the words, the boys and girls of Rivertown let out cheer after cheer, winding up the various school cries with the names of the boys who were to represent it's honor.

Valiantly, Springtown came back, but not enough scholars had come down the river to produce a volume as great as that of the home town,

and they finally abandoned their efforts to outcheer their rivals.

The preliminaries having been arranged while the battle of voices was being fought out, the student leaders had drawn a line on the ice from one of the old landmarks which had been used on the river for the races between the two schools for generations, while three or four others started up the ice to stand the stakes at the finish line, which was also indicated by long established posts.

As soon as the latter had taken their position, the contestants were lined up.

Having lost the choice of distance, according to the traditions of the races between the two schools, the task of starting the race fell to Springtown, and Dick Wenzel, the captain of the baseball team, was proclaimed the man to give the word.

Separating into groups which lined up, each about their representatives, the scholars again gave vent to cheers, and when they finally subsided, Wenzel warned the racers to be ready, then sent them away.

During the time that they were waiting, Paul and Jerry had posted Harry as well as they could on the tricks of their opponents; and the three boys had come to the conclusion that inasmuch as the race was to be for two miles, it would be best to let the visitors set the pace.

The boys from the head of the river, however, quickly fell to the game and slackened their speed.

"Wake up! Put some ginger into it. This isn't a walking match!" shouted the boys and girls who were following the contestants, irrespective of the schools to which they belonged.

During the first few hundred yards, Harry had sized up his opponents closely, noting from the short strokes they took, that while they could maintain a high rate of speed for a short distance, they were more than likely to exhaust themselves before they could go the two miles; and when he heard the taunts of his schoolmates, he decided to take a chance of being outskated by the rivals of Rivertown.

All six of the boys were skating along leisurely, when of a sudden Harry put on a burst of speed, shooting to the front; and before the others had realized what had happened he had opened a space of fifty feet between him and his competitors.

"After him! After him! Don't let him get too much of a lead on you," warned the Springtown students, dismayed to think anyone could make such a gain on their representatives.

The glee of the Rivertown scholars was in proportion to the anxiety of their rivals.

But though the representatives of Springtown responded to the demands of their mates, Harry

had a flying lead and, exert themselves as they would, the boys from up the river could not gain on him.

His arms and feet swinging in perfect rhythm, Harry sped over the smooth ice, the shouts of his schoolmates ringing in his ears.

"You've got a good lead, slow up!" shouted those of his mates who were nearest to him, while others cautioned him to take it easy, in the fear that he could not last the full distance. But the boy knew himself better than they, and kept on at his top speed, unmindful of their advice.

Hard behind him came a Springtown skater, but could not cut down his lead appreciably.

Barely able to hold their own with the others, Paul and Jerry struggled along, and as they saw that their chum had so great an advantage they devoted their energies to coaching him.

"You've got them all puffing, and there's only a quarter more to go! There isn't one of them who can spurt! Just take care of yourself and don't fall!" they shouted from time to time.

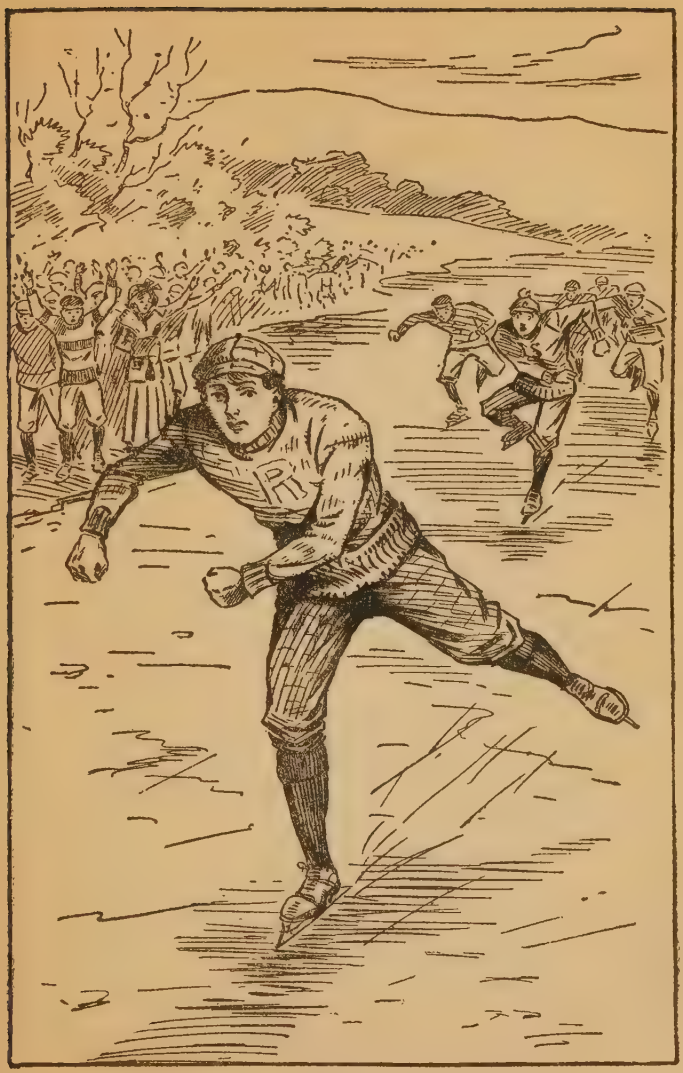
As the cries reached his ears, Harry raised his head, looked for the finish line, and to his delight saw it even nearer than he supposed.

The sight made him feel so happy that he determined to give a still greater exhibition of his speed; and striking out as though he were perfectly fresh, instead of having skated more than a mile

and three-quarters, he raced over the ice, opening farther and farther the distance that separated him from his Springtown rivals.

His spurt had been greeted with gasps of surprise from his schoolmates, and many were the shouts hurled at him to be careful lest he exhaust himself and get beaten out at the finish. When they saw he was skating strong and steadily, however, the Rivertown boys and girls gave vent to the wildest glee, and howled and cheered, breaking their schools yells with rhythmic chants of:

"Watson! Watson! Watson!"



"WATSON! WATSON! WATSON!"

CHAPTER XX

HARRY RECEIVES BAD NEWS

As HARRY dashed across the line, victor, pandemonium broke loose among the scholars; and when they overtook him he was given an ovation that entirely drove from his mind the unpleasant incidents of the morning and early afternoon.

Foremost in congratulations was Viola, and after his friends had thanked him for upholding the honor of Rivertown, and wresting the victory of the annual race from their old time Springtown rivals, Harry and Viola started down the river together.

They had covered about half the distance, when Elmer and Pud put in their appearance. Disagreeable, indeed, were the comments which the rich boy made when he saw the one member of the Rivertown High School he most detested skating with the girl he liked the best.

In vain Viola pretended not to hear the remarks passed by the bully and his companion, but they brought a flush of anger to her cheeks, and noting it, Harry let go her hands.

"If you're tired, Miss Darrow, suppose we wait till the others come up. Then you can skate away with your friends," suggested Harry.

A moment the girl looked at him: "I'm not in the least tired, Mr. Watson!" she exclaimed; "and I don't mind what those two boys are saying, if you don't."

"But I do," returned Harry, "on your account. For that reason I think's it's best that you join your friends."

"But you're *my* friend, aren't you?"

"I hope so, that is, I should like to be."

"Well, I certainly consider you so," returned the girl, and again taking hold of hands, they skated away, laughing and chatting merrily; and continued to skate together till it was time for them to go to their homes to supper.

Light of heart to think he had been cleared of the charges of depredations in the physical laboratory, and successful in defeating the skaters from Springtown, Harry was in a happy frame of mind as he mounted the steps of his aunt's house, and went in to supper. But one sight of his aunt's face drove all his joy away.

"What is it, Aunt Mary? Have you heard about the trouble at the school? Don't worry, because there's nothing in it."

The thought that her nephew had been concerned in some difficulty of which she was ignor-

ant struck still further grievance to the woman.

"No, I haven't heard about it. What is it, tell me?"

"Oh, it doesn't amount to much. Merely that some apparatus was broken in the physical laboratory and they thought that I did it."

So distressed was the woman that, unmindful of how the words would sound, and the impression they would convey, she asked in a tone that was harsher than she would have used if she had been entirely herself.

"You didn't do it, did you?"

In surprise, Harry looked at her for several moments.

"No, indeed," he finally replied.

"Thank goodness. We have trouble enough without that."

Never before had the boy seen his aunt so upset, and her asperity was all the more striking because of her usual kindly humor.

"What's the trouble? Tell me, Aunt Mary, please?" he finally asked.

"It's bad news, Harry."

Instantly the boy became as solemn and serious as his aunt. His face grew white and the lines about his mouth grew deep.

"You mean you've had bad news from father?"

"Yes."

"Poor dad! I guess I'd better give up school and go back to Lawrenceburgh," announced the boy. "If Elmer and Pud ever hear about it, they'll make my life unbearable; and besides, it isn't right for me to be such a drain on father."

"You won't be a drain on him. You mustn't look at it that way!" exclaimed his aunt. "You know you are just as dear to me as though you were my own son, and I want you to stay with me *now*."

"But somebody ought to go down to Lawrenceburgh. It can't be true. There's something wrong somewhere."

"Somebody *is* going down to Lawrenceburgh!" announced a shrill voice.

And looking up, Mrs. Watson and her nephew beheld the kindly face of old Jed Brown, whose usual happy smile had given way to an expression of solemnity.

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Watson.

"That I'm going down to Lawrenceburgh for a few days. I've been wanting to go for a long time. Just been looking for an excuse and now I've got it. I've known Amos since he was a kid in knickerbockers, and I know there isn't a mean or crooked hair in his head. It's all a mistake—and I'm going to set it right."

"Oh, Mr. Brown! If you only could!" ex-

claimed the widow, as the old veteran ceased speaking.

"And I can. Don't worry," he returned. "It may take some time, but I shall find out who's at the bottom of it, and even if Jed Brown is a cripple and poor, he is honest, and he can fight just as in the days when he followed the flag through the campaign in the Wilderness."

So deeply moved were the aunt and nephew, they dared not speak in the fear that they would be unable to control their voices, and they expressed their appreciation of the old veteran's words by shaking his hand cordially.

Sad, indeed, was the little household during the rest of the day, and as soon as Harry could find an excuse he went to his room and to bed, where, after forming various plans for the undoing of his father's enemies, he finally dropped asleep.

"Now you must try to forget that things are not as they always were," whispered his aunt in the boy's ear as he started for school the next morning. "Just appear your usual self, and do not let any of your friends know that you are not happy."

"It isn't my friends I'm afraid of; it's the fellows who don't like me," returned Harry.

"All the more reason why you should keep a stiff upper lip," declared Mrs. Watson. And, promising to do his best, the boy set out for the

bluff on which the Rivertown High School was situated.

But it seemed as though Fate had conspired against Harry!

As he entered the main hallway, Elmer stepped up, having evidently been on the lookout for him.

"See here, Watson, I saw you skating with Viola Darrow yesterday afternoon!" he exclaimed.

"Well, what of it?"

"Just this much—don't do it again!"

"Why not, pray?"

"Because I tell you not to, that's all!"

"Well, you've got to give me some better reason than that, Elmer Craven," flashed the sorely troubled boy. "If Miss Darrow is willing that I should skate with her, I don't see that it is your business or any one else's, as far as that is concerned."

"You'll find it is, though. I tell you, you've got to stop going with her! You remember the laboratory business? Well, it will be just as easy to put a stop to your going with Viola as it was to frame that up on you. So just take my advice and leave her alone!"

So vicious did the rich boy's face become as he uttered his threat that Harry could scarcely believe he was talking with a fellow member of Rivertown High. For the moment, he thought of re-

senting the boy's words with his fists; but the sound of footsteps and the voice of the principal, from behind, caused him to abandon the idea.

"Well, are you going to take my advice?" demanded his enemy, sullenly.

"I'm going to do just as I please, Elmer Craven. Neither you nor any one else can stop me!" retorted Harry. And turning on his heel, he stalked away to his class-room.

But though he had maintained a defiant manner, at heart he was sick. Coming as it did on top of the news from his father, the thought that he would now be obliged to guard himself against underhand attacks from his rival, with whom he had held many angry words, made him deeply anxious, and again the idea which had come to him on the previous night when his aunt had made her announcement,—that he should leave school,—recurred to him.

A happy nod and smile from Viola, who chanced to be passing through the hall on her way to one of her recitations, however, decided the day for Harry.

"I'll not let Elmer Craven make me give up my friendship for Viola!" he told himself. And with this resolve, he proceeded to his various duties.

Having no recitations after the noon recess, Paul suggested that Jerry, Harry and he should

take a sail on his new ice-boat *Lightning,* which had just been delivered to him.

Glad of any diversion that would take his mind from his troubles, Harry readily accepted and the boys went to their several homes for dinner.

Angry that he had failed to scare his rival, Elmer had brooded all the morning over some means of making good his threat, and at last, unable to think of any scheme that would be both adequate and feasible, he dropped into the village butcher shop to consult his friend, Pud.

To his amazement, he found the bully laughing and in high spirits, in striking contrast to the surly gloom he had maintained since the eventful day in Lumberport.

"What's making you feel so gay?" demanded Elmer.

"The fact that I've got Harry Watson now just where I want him!"

His eyes big with incredulity, the richest boy in Rivertown stared at the bully.

"What on earth do you mean?" he finally asked, when he found that Pud made no move to explain his statement.

"Just this!" returned the bully. And he tapped a newspaper which was spread out over one of the chopping blocks.

"But I don't understand?" persisted Elmer.

"Then listen to this!" and Pud read the following:

"'Amos Watson's appeal was denied by the court and he will now be compelled to serve five years in prison to which he was sentenced for forgery."

"Well?" exclaimed Elmer, still mystified.

"What's the matter with you? Have you suddenly lost your senses?" stormed the bully.

"But I don't see what that has to do with that young cur."

"You don't, eh? Well, it has just this to do with it—Amos Watson is Harry's father!"

For several minutes the rich boy stood silent, as though endeavoring to grasp the magnitude of the news which had come to him—and then, with a sudden cry of delight, he struck Pud a resounding whack on the back.

"That's great—provided it's true!" he exclaimed.

"True? Of course it's true. Isn't it in the paper?"

"Yes, but where did you get the paper?" demanded Elmer, picking it up and looking at the name and date line.

"Uncle Briscoe always sends it up from Lawrenceburgh to my mother. She used to live down there, you know."

"No, I didn't, but the paper seems straight enough, so I suppose it's all right."

"You bet it's all right. And now come on, we'll spread the news—and if Harry Watson doesn't wish before night he'd never been born, I'll miss my guess!"

And together the two boys who hated Harry so bitterly set out to scatter the news of his father's misfortune broadcast.

CHAPTER XXI

ELMER BAITS HIS RIVAL

GOOD care did the two boys who were bent on the downfall of our hero take to tell the story of Harry's father being a forger only to those who were not particularly friendly to the lad—with the result that it found ready credence, and was soon being repeated with all manner of exaggerations.

"I don't believe a word of it!" declared Viola, when the report reached her. "Harry Watson is a splendid chap. I——"

"But this isn't Harry, it's his father whose appeal from a prison sentence has been refused," laughed a girl who had told the malicious tale.

"It makes no difference, I don't believe Harry's father is a man who would stoop to any such act!" retorted Viola, hotly. And, putting her arm through Nettie's, the richest girl in Rivertown High went off with her chum—for the story had hurt her more than she cared to have her schoolmates see.

putting his hands to his lips that he might make a funnel that would carry the sound farther.

Surprised at the hail, the three boys rolled from the ice-boat, looking expectantly at the fellows hastening toward them.

"What's wanted?" shouted Paul, as the others came within easy speaking distance.

"I just wanted to tell you that the fellow you're chumming with and going to take on your boat is the son of a prison-bird!" exclaimed Elmer. "I thought you ought to know it."

As he heard the brutal statement, Harry's face grew deathly pale, and he clutched one of the guide ropes with his hand as though to keep himself from falling, while Paul and Jerry looked from his accuser to him, bewildered.

"Wha—what do you mean?" finally stammered Paul. "Who's the son of a prison-bird?"

"Harry Watson!" chorused Elmer and Pud.

"That's not true!" cried Harry, in a quavering voice.

"It is! My mother received a paper from Lawrenceburgh this morning, and it says that Amos Watson is going to prison for five years for forgery!" announced the bully, gloatingly.

"And Amos Watson is your father, isn't he?" demanded Elmer of Harry.

"Yes. But there has been some dirty work

somewhere. My father is as innocent of the charge as you are, Elmer Craven!"

"Evidently the judge didn't think so—or he wouldn't have refused his appeal," sneered the rich tormentor. "Before you get chummy with any more fellows, I advise you to make sure who they are, Paul. And you remember it was you who introduced this son of a prison-bird to Viola."

At the mention of the girl's name, Harry seemed suddenly to galvanize into action.

"You leave Miss Darrow's name out of this, Elmer Craven!" he cried, hotly.

"Oh, is that so? Well, I reckon it will take more than a forger's son to tell me what I shall do and what I shall not. Paul, you've either got to apologize to Viola for introducing this chap to her—or——"

"Or what?" demanded Harry, fairly leaping on his skates toward the boy who had been baiting him until he had goaded him beyond endurance.

Something there was in the tormented boy's eyes that alarmed his rich enemy, and the fellow gave ground, working himself toward the spot where Pud Snooks was standing, as though seeking the protection of the bully.

Harry, however, was too quick for him and, with a sudden turn cut off Elmer's attempt, forcing the boy to face him.

"Or what?" he demanded a second time.

Finding escape impossible, the rich fellow glared into the white, tense face before him.

"Or he'll have to settle with me!" Elmer finished, but his voice was so low that it carried none of its former bravado.

"You're wrong there, Craven. He'll be obliged to settle with me if he does apologize. I may not be as rich as you, nor my father as yours, but we're just as honest!"

"That doesn't seem to be what the judge thought!" repeated Elmer. "I——"

But the limit of insult that Harry could endure had been reached.

After the repetition of the remark about the opinion of the jurist who had denied Mr. Watson's appeal, the boy had drawn back his right arm—and the next moment, his tormentor lay stretched on the ice!

"Coward! Why don't you take a fellow of your size!" cried Pud, skating toward Harry.

"Why don't you?" demanded Paul and Jerry, throwing themselves between the hulking bully who overtopped their chum by three or four inches.

"What are you doing in this? Get out of my way!" snarled Snooks.

But the two boys refused to budge and, realizing that he would not be a match for the pair of

them, the bully skated away, growling to himself.

In the meantime, Elmer had gotten to his feet.

"I'll fix you for this, you see if I don't!" he snarled; with a look of fierce hatred at the boy who had knocked him down.

"I wouldn't, if I were you, Elmer. You only got what you deserved!" returned Paul. "Come on, Harry, if we're going to have our sail on the *Lightning,* we've got to hurry."

"Much obliged—but I don't think I'll go this afternoon," exclaimed our hero; and despite the protests of his chums, he skated to the shore and then for home.

CHAPTER XXII

DARK DAYS

On his way to his aunt's house, Harry met Jed Brown, hobbling along, a valise in his hand.

One look at the boy's white face told the veteran that some new trouble had come to him, and he solicitously inquired its cause.

Harry, however, was not disposed to share his grief with any one.

"Going away?" he asked, warding off the question.

"Yes, down to my sister's at Lawrenceburgh. You know I told you and Mrs. Watson the other night that I was going down—and this afternoon we were talking it over and decided that if I was to do any good, I ought to start without delay."

For a moment Harry was silent as he strove to master himself sufficiently to speak about his father's dilemma.

"I—I hope you'll be able to find out something, Jed;" he said, but his voice quavered pitifully and as he heard it, a light of understanding broke over the aged cripple.

"Have the boys found out about the business?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How?"

"Pud Snooks saw the announcement of the court in a paper that is sent to his mother from Lawrenceburgh."

At the mention of the source of the information, the veteran's brow clouded.

"That Snooks had better watch out!" he snapped. "I—" then he evidently thought better of his intention to say anything further concerning the bully; and taking Harry's hand, he exclaimed: "Just keep good courage in your heart, boy. Things will come out all right. Go about your study and play exactly as though nothing had happened. I'll let you hear from me in a few days. And now I must go or I shall miss my train."

And giving the boy's hand another hearty shake, the crippled veteran started again on his way to the railroad station.

Not more than a few steps had he taken, however, then he felt a hand on his valise, and turning quickly, in the fear that it might be some of the boys who delighted to play tricks on him, he had a snarl on his lips, when he saw that it was Harry.

"I'll go down to the station with you, Mr.

Brown," he announced. "Just let me take your valise."

Glad of the assistance, for he had found his bag heavier than he thought, the veteran held the conversation to cheerful topics, and not again was the unfortunate matter, so close to the hearts of both, mentioned. And waiting until the train departed, Harry took his way home.

But he was not as bereft of friends as he had thought.

No sooner had he taken his departure from the river than the boys who had gathered about the ice-boat took up the discussion of the affair.

"Well, even if Mr. Watson does go to jail, that doesn't mean we should throw Harry down!" announced Paul, resolutely.

Quickly several of the other boys reiterated this opinion, but more of them sided with Elmer and Pud.

"You can associate with him if you want to—but I don't think your father will let you," sneered the rich lad.

"I know mine won't," declared the bully. But instead of his words making the impression he had intended, they drew a burst of laughter from Paul and Jerry.

"What do you find so funny about that?" demanded Pud, angrily.

"That your father should forbid your associating with any one," returned Paul.

"Say, do you think I ain't as good as the Martins or the Posts or any people in Rivertown?"

"I'm not saying anything about that. It merely struck me that a fellow who was only saved from serious trouble by the kindheartedness of an old man whom he had tormented in every way possible ought not to make too many comments about other people," exclaimed Paul, coolly, but uttering each word with deliberation.

Instantly the boys realized that Paul had referred to the incident of the fire which burned Jed Brown's home, and they awaited the effect upon the bully with eagerness. But it was not what they expected.

For a moment, Pud looked into the eyes of the boy who had taken up the cudgels for his absent chum; then lowered his own, growled something that none of his auditors could understand, and skated away.

"Now you go, too, Craven," advised Jerry. "If I were you, I'd hire Pud to go round with me —or else stop talking about Harry Watson."

"What do you mean?" demanded the rich student.

"Didn't I make myself plain enough? I said for you to stop talking about Harry Watson."

"Huh, I'd like to see any one stop me."

"Well, you will, if you don't watch out."

At the words, Craven skated away from Jerry, evidently mindful of the blow he had received from Harry; and with one accord, the excited crowd of boys broke into small groups whose sole topic of conversation was the news from Lawrenceburgh.

Among the townsfolk as well as the scholars, the story spread, and in due time Mr. Larmore and all the teachers heard of it.

"I don't belief it!" announced Prof. Schmidt, emphatically, when it was told him at supper. And when he had finished the meal, the kindly old German put on his fur coat and cap and went round to call on Mrs. Watson.

The coming of the professor was distinctly embarrassing to both the good woman and her nephew. But he soon put them at their ease by announcing that he hoped Harry would not let the matter keep him from school.

"That's just what we were talking about when you came, Professor," declared Mrs. Watson.

A ring at the door-bell interrupted her and when Harry answered it and admitted the principal of the Rivertown High School, she became even more confused.

Mr. Larmore, however, quickly made it evident that he had come for the same purpose as had the genial old German; and after much talk-

ing, Mrs. Watson finally agreed that her nephew should continue his studies.

But it was a quiet and sober Harry who entered his classroom the next morning.

His friends strove to convey their sympathy and belief in him by cordial nods. But their kindness was more than offset by the sneers and grunts with which his enemies greeted him. So keenly did the boy feel them that he made his laboratory work an excuse for not joining his companions during the recesses.

What hurt him most, however, was Viola's attitude. Though she had smiled at him when he had entered the classroom, when he had tried to speak to her she had skilfully prevented it by moving away when she saw him approaching. And deeply did her action cut Harry, so that he vowed to himself he would not give her another opportunity to cause him pain.

For some time things drifted along, and Harry continued to be the storm center of the school world. Some of his fellows shunned him, and others tried to establish themselves on even a more friendly footing with him than at first. But Harry's attitude was neutral, his only decided stand being to refuse to appear in the Pi Eta society room, though his friends endeavored in every way to persuade him.

During that time old Jed Brown did not return

to Rivertown, nor did our hero hear from the old veteran. Harry's aunt heard from Mr. Watson, but the news was not encouraging.

"They still consider your father guilty," said the aunt to the youth. "But we know he is innocent, and some day the world will know it, too."

"Perhaps," said Harry, sadly. "But, oh, Aunt Mary, to have him in prison! It is awful! I can't bear to think of it!"

CHAPTER XXIII

A MILE A MINUTE SPIN

"Good morning, Mrs. Watson; is Harry at home?"

Saturday had come, with clear skies, and a cold, crisp air that gave promise of a fine day's sport on the ice for Rivertown's young people. It was Paul Martin who had knocked at the door of the widow's house, and greeted her with his cheery smile when she admitted him.

"Good morning, Paul!" replied the good woman, the look of distress on her face giving way for a moment to one of pleasure at seeing this loyal friend of her nephew. "Yes, he is in his den, busy with something. The poor boy seldom goes out these days; and I'm afraid the constant grieving will tell on his health."

"That is just why I've come around, ma'am, to try and influence Harry to take a spin with me on my iceboat," Paul continued, eagerly. "You see, we were just going to have a run before, when Pud Snooks interrupted us with that un-

pleasant bit of news; and Harry backed out. We lost all interest in the sport soon afterward, and I've really had little heart for it since."

"It was good of you to think of your friend in this way, Paul," the widow said, laying a hand on the lad's shoulder, and looking affectionately into his manly face. "And depend on it, Harry is worthy of all your regard. I know something about boys, even though I was never blessed with one myself; and if ever there lived a clean, brave and loyal fellow, Harry is one. And Paul, he must go off with you to get some fresh air. This staying in, and thinking of all his troubles, is not the best thing for even his strong nature."

"Then please back me up," said Paul, "in case he tries to beg off. I'm going to insist; and I think I know how to reach Harry's weak spot. I'll give him to understand that if he refuses, it's going to spoil all my Saturday morning sport. Harry will make sacrifices for a chum that he would never think of doing for himself. And now I'll push in on him, if you don't mind."

As he opened the door of Harry's little den, where the boy did his studying, and kept such traps as boys usually accumulate, he found the object of his solicitude bending over a table, and deep in some book.

"Hello! here, old book-worm, this is no morning to bury yourself here indoors like a hermit!"

cried Paul, as he burst in on his chum like a breath of the crisp Winter air.

Harry looked up, and his face was immediately wreathed in a smile. The very presence of such a fine, healthy fellow like Paul was enough in itself to chase away the blues. He sprang to his feet, and grasped the hand that was thrust out toward him, wringing it with boyish ardor. For deep down in his heart he knew full well that Paul was almost as much concerned over the trouble that had of late befallen him, as he could be himself.

"Glad to see you, Paul!" he exclaimed. "Yes, it does look like a great day for a Saturday; and I guess lots of fellows will be glad. The ice must be fine after that little thaw, and hard freeze. I haven't been down to the river you know, of late. I just seem to feel that I ought to keep away from my friends, and save them from embarrassment."

If there was a trace of bitterness in Harry's voice, Paul did not notice it. He did catch the tremor though, that told of a sore heart; and impulsively he again squeezed the hand of his chum.

"That's just what brought me here right now," he observed, seriously. "You must get out more, Harry. You know yourself that all this brooding over your affairs isn't going to do you a bit of

good. Things are going to come out all right yet; but it may take some time. Meanwhile it's foolish of you to shun your best friends, and keep indoors. I've come to carry you off to the river with me, d'ye hear?"

Harry sighed, and cast a look of sincere affection on this staunch friend. They had been utter strangers only a few months back; and yet so strong had the ties become that bound them together, that he fancied he cared as much for Paul as he could have done for a brother.

"Thank you, Paul," he said, slowly. "I'd like to go first-rate; but I've made up my mind to keep clear of all the high school young people until this mystery is solved, and I can look them in the face without a blush. Understand, I have the utmost faith in my father; and I *know* he must be innocent of the charge brought against him; but so far old Jed has not sent any cheering word; and I must wait."

"But I say again, that's no reason for you to keep on hurting your health," Paul insisted. "Even your Aunt Mary is getting anxious about you; and Harry, she's been so good to you, don't you think it is a little cruel to add to her burden in any way?"

Harry sighed again, and looked undecided.

"Yes, Aunt Mary is as good as gold," he observed. "And I certainly wouldn't want to cause

her any unnecessary pain; but Paul, somehow I haven't the heart to do the things I used to. I feel a terrible weight in here,"—putting his hand on his chest as he spoke—" that hurts. In my present condition I'd only be a drawback to any crowd of merry boys and girls; and so I stay away."

Perhaps Paul could understand more than Harry gave him credit for. Perhaps he guessed that it was partly the coolness of one particular girl that helped give his chum this heavy feeling in the region of his heart. For he knew how much Harry had come to care for Viola; and it was difficult for him to understand just why she should take up again with Elmer Craven, whom she had once cut dead.

" All right," he said cheerily; " for once, then, you've just got to put that idea out of your head, and come along with me, Harry. Your aunt says you must, and insists that I carry you off to get a few hours of bracing air. And yet, if you'd rather stay here in your den to being in my company, why——"

" Oh! you know better than that, Paul! " cried the other lad eagerly, as he looked into the face of his friend. " I've enjoyed many happy hours in your company; and if it wasn't for this unfortunate business——"

" That's enough, Harry," and Paul in turn broke in on what the forlorn boy was trying to say

in a trembling voice; "you've just got to come along now, or else all my plans for the morning will be broken up. I'd arranged for the two of us, no others, mind, to take my new iceboat, *Lightning,* and have a great spin far up the river. The ice couldn't be beat; and I'm determined that it's just got to be *you* with me, or no one. That's flat. Now, what do you say?"

Harry smiled with pleasure. It was almost worth suffering all that he had endured in these last few unhappy days, just to learn what a true friend meant.

"Well, you put it up to me in a way that knocks out all my argument," he said.

"Then you'll come with me?" demanded Paul, eagerly.

"Sure I will, and mighty glad of the chance," Harry replied, as he started to look for his cap, and his warm sweater to go under his coat; for he knew that a long ride on an iceboat, going a mile a minute more than likely, meant chilled bodies, unless care was taken to supply warm clothing.

Once he had decided on his course, Harry seemed somewhat like his old self. Mrs. Watson, as they passed through the outer room, smiled, and nodded to Paul.

"I'm glad to see you managed to coax him to go, Paul," she remarked; and both lads waved

her good-bye as they left the door, walking briskly down the street of Rivertown.

Paul's father had a boat-house on the bank of the river just outside the town limits, where in Summer the boys often gathered in order to enjoy the sports of the season. There was a new shed attached to this, in which Paul kept the iceboat he had had built recently, but which had as yet hardly been tried out.

In a short time the two lads were busily engaged getting the frail craft out of its quarters, and down on the ice. The mast had to be stepped every time Paul wished to make use of the flier; since the shed was too low to admit of its being stored as it stood. But this proved a job of small moment.

"I guess you know a heap about these kind of boats, Harry?" remarked the owner of the *Lightning,* as he watched the deft manner in which his new chum handled the various ropes connected with the up-to-date craft built for ice use.

At that Harry laughed, the first little burst of merriment that had escaped his lips for days; and which made his friend feel that he had done well to coax the grieving lad outdoors, where he could get the invigorating influence of the ozone to be found in the crisp wintry air.

"Oh! yes, I suppose I might say I have, without seeming to boast," he answered, as he bent

down to make sure that everything was adjusted, and the wire stay that held the mast in place as taut as the turnbuckle could make it. "We used to have a boat down at Lawrenceburgh, and somehow they got to making me the skipper; last Winter we won every race we entered for. But Paul, that boat wasn't in the same class as this new one you've got, I tell you that."

"Then you think the *Lightning* is apt to go some?" inquired the owner, eagerly.

"Do I?" echoed Harry, quickly. "Unless I'm away off in my judgment, she's bound to beat everything along the river. I never saw such fine lines; and best of all, I don't think the builder has sacrificed anything in the way of staunchness to speed. Mark my word, Paul, she's going to turn out a crackerjack!"

"I'm mighty glad to hear that, Harry!" declared Paul, "for a good many reasons. A fellow likes to have a clipper boat, you know, one that isn't going to take dust from any other chap's racer. And then, it would just give me heaps of fun if I could leave the old *Glider* far back in the lurch."

"That's Elmer's iceboat, isn't it?" asked Harry.

"Sure. He hasn't had it out this Winter, I understand, because for two years now it's just run away from everything there was; and Elmer said

he was tired of making circles around the rest of us. But three times now he's asked me when I expected to get my new boat running; and as much as told me he was waiting to add it to the has-beens he's beaten."

"Well, don't you believe he's going to have an easy job walking away from this dandy thing on runners," Harry observed. "I'm ready to say that you've got the very last word in iceboats here in the *Lightning*. And before another hour has passed you'll feel that you made no mistake when you gave her that name. Now, if you're ready, let's make a start."

Harry was anxious to be off. He had noticed that several boys and girls were heading toward them, having skated up from below. And in his present state of mind he would rather avoid meeting any of his school companions if it could be arranged.

"How about the wind?" asked Paul, as they started to take their places on the thin but strong planks of the iceboat, which had been padded with folded blankets, so as to make it more comfortable for those who had to stretch out at full length while managing the running craft.

"It seems to be everything we could want this morning," Harry replied. "In fact, I don't think there ever was a day here on the Conoque River better fitted for a try-out of a new iceboat than

this same Saturday morning. And I'm glad now that I came with you, Paul."

"Bully for you, Harry! That's all I wanted to hear. And now, let's cut loose before all those fellows get in our way."

Longback, Socker Gales, and Misery Jones were among those coming full tilt for the spot where they had discovered the new boat on the river's edge.

They gave vent to various whoops and cries when they saw that Paul and Harry were starting off without waiting for their arrival.

"Hi! aint you goin' to let us have a look-in at the new boat, before you smash her with that Jonah aboard?"

"Listen, Paul! Just you keep right on up the river, and my word for it you'll get yours before you come back!"

"Wow! look at her go, would you? Say, fellers, she's all to the mustard, you c'n tell me what you please about the *Glider*. Paul knew what he was doing when he gave the order for that dandy contraption. Gee! don't I wish I was on her right now!"

These last words just barely reached the ears of the two who lay flattened out on the delicate flooring of the ice yacht. Harry heard his chum chuckling, as if somehow the last remark had given him a good feeling.

The skaters started after them, but were speedily left far behind, and presently gave the chase up as useless. And now the whole river lay before the two iceboat chums, with not a single person to interfere with their sport; since it was as a rule farming country above Rivertown, on both sides of the watercourse.

Few rivers offered better fields for this sport than the Conoque. While not of any great depth, it was as a rule quite wide; and in places presented a magnificent spread of smooth, clear ice, over which the sharp runners glided like magic, as the favoring breeze filled their sail, and urged them on at tremendous speed.

Then again, once in a while they would come to a neck where the going was quite different, since the ice was rougher, and they had to look out for airholes. In the Summer season, when the water was lower, these places were called the "rips"; being in reality small rapids, where the water rushed with noisy volume, and the fishing was considered prime.

"Well, what d'ye think of that?" called out Paul, after they had been booming along in this manner for a little while, passing a couple of the narrow places, where considerable care had to be exercised to avoid trouble.

"Splendid! Never went like this before! You've got a wonder here, Paul, and don't you

forget it," answered Harry, whose face was now rosy with the action of the keen wind and the cold air; while his eyes sparkled much as they had been wont to do before this trouble came upon him, to crush his young spirits so completely.

"That pleases me a whole lot, Harry," laughed the owner of the craft. "And say, I've been watching the way you handle that tiller. Elmer Craven boasts of being the best iceboat sailor on the river; but I'm ready to put you up against him any old day. Why, you manage things so that she seems to be next door to human. No matter what sort of wind strikes us, you've got a way of setting her with it, that just suits every time. If this boat's a wonder, Harry, you're the fellow that can get every ounce of speed out of her."

"Here, that will do for you, Paul," answered Harry; though naturally the words of genuine praise made him feel happy, as he had been up against so many hard knocks lately, at the hands of those who bore him so much ill will. "I'd just like to try her against some other boat of the same class. That's the only way to get a pointer on her speed and cleverness, you know."

"Perhaps we may, and this very morning," remarked Paul, mysteriously, but with a grin accompanying the words.

"What makes you say that?" demanded his

companion, who had to keep his eyes on the alert pretty much all the time, since a flaw of wind might swoop down on them at any second, and if he failed to be quick with the rudder, in order to ease up on the sudden strain, an upset was likely to follow.

"Didn't you hear what Misery Jones shouted after us?" Paul went on, answering one question, Yankee fashion, by asking another.

"Was it Misery who called out for you to listen; and then said something about you 'getting yours' if you kept on up the river?" Harry continued.

"Sure, that was Misery. He's never so happy as when acting as a prophet, and predicting all sorts of trouble ahead for other people. That's why the boys call him Misery; he sees all kinds of accidents looming up, even if they hardly ever come along. But Harry, I don't think the fellow had any accident in store for us that time, when he said I would get mine up here to-day."

"Then what did he have in mind?" asked Harry, his curiosity aroused.

"I've been thinking it over," Paul went on, "and decided that Misery must know Elmer is out this morning with his *Glider;* and somewhere up-river way. What he meant was that if we happened to run across his hawser, I would find my

new iceboat as badly left in the lurch as my old one was last year."

"Perhaps," laughed the one who handled the tiller so dexterously; "all things are possible, you know, Paul; but I wouldn't worry over that, if I were you. Just let Elmer show up, and we'll see what the *Lightning* was built for."

"There's a bunch of fellows coming down the river," said Paul, a minute later. "They live some miles up at a village called Rushville. Several of our high school scholars come down from there every day on the train, you know. I was going to say that if we could shut off some of our tremendous speed, and draw in closer to them, I might find out whether Elmer really did go up-river."

"All right," responded Harry, readily; "that's easy enough done.

He manipulated the tiller, and watched the way the wind spilled out of the big sail as he ran partly across the ice field, heading so as to intercept the skaters. These boys, seeing that those on the fine new iceboat wished to speak with them, only too gladly came to a standstill, and watched the clever way in which Harry managed to bring his craft up in the teeth of the wind close beside them.

"Hello! Paul, that your new boat?" cried one of the up-river fellows, as he advanced to get a

closer look at the now still *Lightning*. "Well, I must say she's got lines to go some, and then not half try. Give you my word I never saw such a trim and dandy iceboat; and I wish I had a chance to take a spin on her with you."

"Perhaps you may, some of these fine days, Hank," remarked Paul with a grin; for he had always been friendly with the Rushville student at school. "Just now we're out on the warpath, looking for scalps, you see, and want to be on the fly."

The three boys looked at each other as though hardly catching the true meaning of what Paul said. But a moment later Hank laughed aloud as the significance of the words appealed to him.

"Ho! I get it all right now, Paul!" he exclaimed, nodding his head while speaking. "You want to find something to whack your new boat up against, eh? Well, what's the matter with the *Glider?* Elmer didn't do a thing to you last Winter, if I remember right; and the spirit of revenge must be rankling in your heart. Is that it?"

"Perhaps a little that way," answered Paul, frankly. "You know he's got a nasty way of rubbing it in every time he does anything; that stings worse than the defeat itself does. I've never heard the last of that race, and how nicely he trimmed me. And to tell the honest truth, that was why I went to all the trouble and expense

of having this new craft built to order. I want to turn the tables on him in the worst way."

"Couldn't have a better day for it!" nodded Hank.

"Oh! the weather is all to the good," declared Paul, impatiently; "but see here, you fellows have come down several miles—have you seen anything of another iceboat between here and Rushville?"

"Have we, fellows?" asked Hank, turning to his two companions and winking. "Was that a real iceboat that went whipping past us just after we started out; or might it have been just a shadow when a cloud passed over the sun? Yes, I rather guess it did look like the sassy thing Elmer used to cut circles with around all the other boats on the river last two years."

"Which way were they going did you say?" asked Paul, giving his chum a significant look, as if to say: "What did I tell you; didn't I remark that this was going to be a red letter day with me, since it would wipe out the sting of that old defeat at the hands of Elmer Craven, which I've never heard the last of?"

"Oh! up-river like a streak of light," replied Hank. "No use talking, that *Glider* can go to beat the Dutch; and Elmer knows how to sail her too, the best ever; but I like the looks of this new craft, Paul, and from the way Harry handles the

tiller I opine now that you're just bound to give Elmer the time of his life when you challenge him to a race."

"That's what we intend to do, Hank," returned Paul. "Much obliged for telling us about him. We can keep going now till we scrape his acquaintance. He's been begging me for some time to get out and let him rub some of the rust from his runners. To-day suits me all right. And Hank, mark my words, the thirteenth of the month, you notice, is going to be a mighty unlucky day for Elmer Craven, if I don't miss my guess. It's skidoo for him, as sure as you're born. So-long, boys!"

Harry threw the sail around and immediately the *Lightning* shot away with a sudden bound. They opened a big gap between themselves and the three boys standing there on the ice; but Paul, looking back could see Hank and his comrades waving their caps and sending out cheers that came but faintly to the ears of those who were speeding so rapidly up the river.

As a rule the Conoque ran due north and south, though there were places where abrupt turns were the exception. And as the breeze was almost due west this allowed of almost unlimited possibilities in sailing, with a craft so sensitive to the slightest breath of air as an iceboat on a smooth, mirror-like surface.

It took them but a short time to reach and pass the village of Rushville, situated on the left bank of the Conoque River. Of course quite a number of persons were enjoying the skating at this point; and the moment the *Lightning* came into view around the bend half a mile below, loud shouts attested to the interest taken in her appearance.

Again did Harry slow up, as Paul wished to ask questions of these boys. The news received was to the effect that some time before Elmer and Pud Snooks had passed up, and incidentally come near running over a little child, as they purposely swung in as if to show just how close they could come to anyone without hitting them. The Rushville boys were quite indignant, and talking about it when the second iceboat hove in sight.

"On again, Harry," sang out Paul, after they had learned all they wanted to know. "We'll run across them somewhere above; and perhaps Elmer Craven will be in for the surprise of his life. Somehow I just feel that this is my day; and I want to make the most of it. Let her go, fellows; and thank you for telling us."

Harry had for the time being quite forgotten all about his troubles; and this was just what his chum desired most of all. Indeed, perhaps it was more to accomplish this than anything else that he sought a meeting with Elmer; though, of

course, boy-like, he did want to even the old score, and pay up his debt.

"You've never been up this far before, I reckon?" he remarked, after they had left Rushville several miles behind.

"That's a fact, Paul," came the reply. "And I never dreamed that the Conoque was such a dandy stream for this sort of thing. Why, in places it's fully a quarter of a mile from bank to bank. Yes, I'm glad I've come with you, Paul."

"And perhaps you'll be more than glad before the morning passes," Paul was saying to himself; for he knew just how matters stood between Harry and Elmer; and that if they could manage to humiliate the proud, boastful spirit of the rich man's son, it must be more or less of a satisfaction to Harry.

Two minutes later and Paul gave vent to a cry.

"Look yonder!" he exclaimed. "A mile ahead the Cranberry flows into the Conoque; and unless my eyes deceive me there's an iceboat coming whooping down that smaller stream. Yep, that's the *Glider,* as sure as anything. I ought to know her build; and Harry, get ready now to show them *a streak of greased lightning!*"

CHAPTER XXIV

HARRY PILOTS THE LIGHTNING

"So THAT's Elmer's boat, is it?" remarked Harry, as he managed to catch a fleeting glimpse of the tall mast of a rapidly moving craft, that was sweeping down the ice covered tributary of the Conoque, now partly hidden behind a clump of trees, and again passing a fairly open spot.

"Head in so as to be ready to follow after him, whichever way he turns," advised Paul, his voice betraying signs of excitement; for he had been looking forward to this same meeting for many weeks, and anticipating the pleasures of turning the tables on his boasting rival of long standing.

But Harry seemed as cool as though there were nothing at stake. He had schooled himself to repress his feelings when a great emergency arose, calling for calm judgment, as well as quick action.

"I think I've got the course we want," he remarked, quietly, as the *Lightning* bore well in toward the shore, just below the junction of the

two rivers. "I don't dare pass too far in, because you see that high bank, and the bunch of trees, interfere with the wind, and we'd get blanketed. There they come, Paul!"

Shooting out from the Cranberry like a thing of life, the rival iceboat made a graceful sweep and continued up the river.

"They did that on purpose!" cried Paul, as though a bit disgusted at the turn affairs had taken. "Let him say what he will, I believe Elmer is afraid of this boat. He came and examined her the day I rigged her up; and although he pretended to laugh, I could just see that he was chewing the rag. Yes, look at Pud waving his hand at us; and he's shouting something too."

"All right," said Harry, without the least show of worry; we've got our work cut out for us, that's all. You know something about the river above; can we run any distance with the boats?"

"Sure!" answered the other member of the crew; "it's the most obliging old river you ever heard tell of. Miles and miles it stretches away, sometimes narrow, and again broad; but if this wind only holds out, we can spin along like fun for more'n an hour. Hit her up, Harry, let's see just what the bully contraption carries up her sleeve. After 'em with a hot stick now!"

Really, Harry needed no urging. The spirit of sport had been fully aroused in his breast. For-

gotten for the time being, were all those grim troubles that had of late been making life so miserable for the boy. He only seemed to remember that once more his hand grasped the tiller of a staunch ice flier; and that a derisive challenge had floated back from the boat ahead.

And possibly, the fact that the two fellows who manned the *Glider* were his most bitter and unscrupulous enemies, had more or less to do with Harry's determination to beat the rival boat. He would not have been human had he felt otherwise; and while Harry possessed many fine attributes, he was after all, only a boy at heart.

The *Lightning* had, of course, lost considerable of her headway when the skipper ran in so close to the high bank; but she was gradually veering further away now, with every second.

On the other hand, the opposing boat had come out of the Cranberry under a full sail; and shifting her course, was running up the Conoque with a speed that opened quite a gap between the rival craft.

Then in turn Harry and Paul saw that they were getting opposite the mouth of the smaller stream, where the wind would be wholly unobstructed. No sooner had this occurred than they jumped ahead as though some unseen power had taken the boat in tow.

"How about it now?" asked the skipper, wish-

ing to have Paul report progress; as he had about all he could do in taking care of the skimming ice craft, watching how the wind acted on the sail, keeping a cautious eye out for any obstruction in the way of a branch of a tree frozen in the ice, or possibly an air hole which, if not avoided, might spell disaster to the pursuing boat.

"We are sure holding our own, Harry!" exclaimed Paul, delightedly.

That was an experience new to him; for up to now the *Glider* had mocked all efforts to equal her extraordinary speed. But Harry knew that, as yet, he had not put the new boat to her "best licks," as he termed it. She was capable of better things.

This was just the time and opportunity for one who knew all about the tricks which an iceboat is capable of developing, to coax her to show her fine points; and that was what Harry was now starting to do.

Perhaps the boats were about equal in merit. Possibly, had the crews been reversed, Harry and Paul could have overtaken the *Lightning,* given time with the older craft. In other words, it was a case of superior knowledge and ability on the part of the skipper of the *Lightning,* rather than the possession of a better boat; for the *Glider* was certainly what she had always been called, a "marvel."

"Wow! we're gaining, I do believe, Harry!" announced Paul, a minute later; and there was a touch of actual doubt in his voice, as though the fact might be almost too good to be true.

"Are we?" answered his chum, just as though it were nothing more than he had been expecting right along.

"Yes, as sure as anything we must be," Paul went on excitedly. "I'm trying to judge distances with my eye; and honest now, I believe we're not so far behind as when we first passed the mouth of the Cranberry! Oh! it's great! Keep her moving just as she is, Harry! Do you think you can? That wasn't only a spurt, I hope!"

"She can do even better than that, Paul. Watch me now, for I'm on to a new little dodge. Keep an eye for blow-holes, and branches frozen in the ice. And Paul, shift your weight just a trifle this way. I believe the balance will be more even."

Another short interval followed. Then Paul gave vent to his delight again.

"You did something then that just made her hump herself. Why, Harry, we're clawing up on the old *Glider* hand over fist! Look at 'em moving around, will you? They're getting scared, that's what! Elmer never yet saw another boat creeping up after him when he was doing his level

best to fly. Bully! Bully! Oh, ain't we just humming along, though!"

It was no easy matter to speak while they were cutting through space at such a tremendous pace and Paul would have done better to have saved his breath; but he had waited and hoped for this great day so long, that he just could not bottle up his delight.

Not a sound could they hear around them save the whistle of the wind through the ropes above, or the sharp humming music of the runners spurning the smooth ice. Pud had long since ceased to shout derisive cries back at the pursuers. His scorn and mocking gestures had changed into nervous movements, as he tried to increase the speed of the *Glider* by altering his position from time to time.

When another five minutes had passed, though it seemed an hour to the impatient Paul, they had gained so much upon the other boat that the two were now within easy speaking distance. Yet strange to say, those on the *Glider* maintained a dead silence, that was quite unusual to their buoyant natures. It makes considerable difference whether one is on a winning or a losing craft.

Paul, however, could not keep still. This experience almost set him wild with delight. And where could you find a boy who would decline to rub it in a little, given the chance?

"Hey! you there!" he hallooed, using his hands as a megaphone; "get out of the way, and give us room. We're going to pass you, and let you take our dust! Sheer off to one side, and let us have the middle of the river! We've earned the right of way. Lively now, Elmer! You're a back number after this, with your out-of-date boat! To the scrap heap for yours!"

Perhaps it was hardly kind of Paul to add to the humiliation which Elmer must naturally be feeling, as he thus saw that the *Glider* was plainly playing "second fiddle" to the new iceboat; but it must be remembered that for years now, the son of the richest man in Rivertown had lost no opportunity to sneer at Paul, and humiliate him when he had the chance.

Apparently the two who crouched there on the *Glider* were at their wits' ends to discover some means for increasing their sped. They seemed to be exchanging warm sentences, and Harry even thought he heard Elmer's rasping voice raised in anger, as though he might be trying to lay the burden of the blame on the bully, whose extra weight might be just the cause for the difference in speed of the two boats.

Pud could also be heard answering back, and it sounded as though he were telling his comrade that the fault lay in his lack of skill in managing the *Glider,* rather than the handicap of weight.

"Can we pass 'em, d'ye think?" gasped Paul, as they drew still closer to the leading boat, on which a dead silence had now fallen.

"Easy enough, unless Elmer chooses to play some trick on us," replied Harry.

"Oh! would he dare do that, when we're spinning along at this mad clip?" demanded the owner of the new boat.

"You know him better than I do, Paul," replied Harry. "I don't like the look on his face. He keeps turning his head, then grinning in a nasty way; after which he looks ahead, just as if he was sizing up some desperate chance. I think he means to foul us up if he can; and anyhow it's going to be a hard thing to pass him up here, where nobody can see any dirty play."

Paul seemed to consider. No doubt discretion urged him to call the race off; but on the other hand he disliked very much to quit just when he had his rival where he had wanted to see him so long.

A fisherman never calls a trout his own until he has the prize in his hands; even though he may humanely throw the speckled beauty back into the water again. And in a race it does not really count, unless you actually pass your adversary.

So Paul, with boyish recklessness, determined to take the chances for trouble, and pass the *Glider,* come what might. He knew Elmer to be some-

what reckless; but found it hard to believe that the other would risk having his own bones broken, just to smash the successful boat of his rival.

But Paul counted wrongly. Elmer, when he became enraged, was not the same cool, calculating schemer that he had the name of being under normal conditions. And, urged on by the sarcastic sneers of the ugly Pud, as well as his own keen disappointment at seeing his pet iceboat fairly beaten, he might even take chances which at another time would have appalled him.

"That's too bad!" Paul heard Harry exclaim.

"Oh, what's happened?" Paul cried, in sudden alarm. "Are we going to lose out, after all that magnificent gain? But Harry, see, we're still creeping up! Only twenty feet more, and we'll be on even terms! What do you mean?"

"Look far ahead!" answered Harry.

"I see that the river narrows again, the other boy replied instantly. "Is that what you mean?"

"Yes. We're going to have to try and pass, while in that narrow stretch!" Harry sent across to his reclining chum; for their heads were only a few feet apart.

"But there's plenty of room for both! I remember that cut well, Harry! I had my canoe upset there once, shooting the rapids when the river was low in Summer. Yes, it's sure wide enough for even five boats abreast!"

"If they're piloted by honest fellows, who mean to deal squarely with each other," said Harry, significantly.

Paul was conscious of the fact that his chum was putting the decision squarely up to him. He felt a little uneasy. What if they should meet with a serious accident in trying to pass the *Glider* in such confined quarters? Was it right for him to drag Harry into this peril?

"What ought we do, Harry?" he demanded, quickly; for they were rushing toward the place where the banks of the Conoque drew closer together, and fast overtaking the rival boat.

"Are you willing to take the risk?" came the immediate reply.

"Yes; but how about you?" asked Paul.

"I'm with you, Paul," the pilot sent back, impetuously. "The chance is too good to be lost. And perhaps I can find a way to outwit him, if he tries any funny business. Be ready to do your part like lightning, if I give the word."

"I'm on! Go it, for all you're worth, Harry!"

There was really no time for further words. They had now reached the beginning of the narrows, and at the same time found themselves close up with the tail end of the other iceboat.

Paul, sending one nervous glance that way, could see Pud Snooks glaring at them as though he could eat either of the two alive. There was

an expression on his heavy face that bordered on desperation; and Paul became more than ever convinced that Elmer and his crony must have made up their minds to attempt some crooked play, in the hope of balking the efforts of the Lightning's crew to pass them.

All this while Harry had been studying his chances. He had purposely come up from behind, and had chosen the leeward side of the boat in advance. This was done with a distinct purpose. If, as he expected, Elmer altered the course of the *Glider,* and attempted to block their way, Harry meant to suddenly shift his helm and shoot up on the windward side.

This movement he calculated to make so suddenly as to momentarily confuse the opposing pilot. And when Elmer could collect his senses enough to follow suit he would be just so many seconds too late; for by that time possibly the *Lightning* might be on even terms; and the big sail would blanket the *Glider,* shutting off the wind that was so essential to her forward progress.

Then perhaps, before she could recover from this staggering blow, the *Lightning,* which would not have lost her headway for even a second, might be out of reach, and rapidly leaving her outwitted rival in the lurch.

At such a time as this it requires an active brain to hatch up a scheme that carries with it a

chance of success. Fortunately Harry was built that way. He saw his opportunity, and grasped it without hesitation.

Paul, as yet, had not the remotest idea just how his chum meant to work the deal. He recognized the fact that those on the other boat would try to get in the way, regardless of accidents, and block their passage. Thus Elmer would always claim that he had never been passed by any other iceboat, and if both craft were reduced to kindling wood by the collision, little he cared in his present reckless frame of mind.

But Paul had the utmost confidence in his comrade. He had seen Harry in action before now, and recognized the fact that he was gifted with a bright mind, capable of grasping the situation, and turning even a little thing to advantage.

And so he just lay there, holding on for dear life, ready to "take his medicine," as he termed it, should there be a spill; and also keeping himself in readiness to do his little part should the skipper give a quick order; for it was Paul's duty to look after the sail, and handle the sheet if they had to tack during their run, with the wind heading them off.

Now they were nosing up, so that the fore part of the *Lightning* seemed but a yard or two behind the rudder of the opposing craft, once called the "Queen of the Conoque," but apparently des-

tined to yield up that proud title to the later model owned by Paul Martin.

"Ha!"

It was Paul himself who gave utterance to this exclamation. Apparently he had been holding his breath for half a minute past, in anticipation of what was to come; and this signified that the startling event was being put into play.

Elmer had shifted his tiller just enough to change the course of his boat, and veer slightly to leeward. Of course this necessitated a change in the running of the pursuing craft, otherwise the *Lightning* must immediately strike the stern of the leader.

Harry followed suit, and for a moment both boats continued on that slant. But it could not last, of course. The shore was too close by; and if they continued to veer to leeward both must go aground, to the utter demoralization of the delicate craft.

Paul could see that leering face of Pud almost within reach of his hand. It seemed as though the bully might be asking what he was going to do about it; and giving him to understand that he might as well cut his halyards, and let his sail drop, because he and Elmer were grimly determined that no iceboat should ever sail past the *Glider,* come what might.

So Paul set his teeth hard, expecting a spill of

some sort when the bow of his boat struck the stern of the other, while going at this amazing speed. Perhaps his face was white, which fact could hardly be wondered at under the circumstances. But there was no sign of fear there. Paul proved game when the test came, just as Harry had known would be the case.

A foot—why the distance between the two boats must be measured by inches now, so rapidly had it been cut down by the rush of the pursuing craft.

Just as Paul gave a gasp, expecting to feel the shock of the collision, and perhaps be tumbled headlong over the smooth ice, he felt Harry make a sudden move.

The skipper of the *Lightning* had waited until the very last second, and then swung the tiller around!

Instantly obeying the rudder, the able boat changed her course. She no longer headed to leeward, but swung in the other direction, aiming for the windward bank of the river.

"Oh! bully! bully! bully!" cried Paul, as the plan of his chum flashed across his mind; and at the same time he occupied himself in tugging at the sheet in order to shape the bellying sail to the new course of the rapidly-driven boat.

Apparently Elmer was taken quite by surprise by this movement on the part of his rival. His

mind was not quite equal to grasping the full significance of it, and responding so rapidly that he might still have a chance of bringing about a disastrous collision.

When he swung around, Pud was also slow to do his duty with the rope governing the sail. He had been altogether wrapped up in setting himself for the anticipated shock of an upset; so that it took him several seconds to grasp the new conditions.

When they did succeed in changing their course, just before bringing up on the lee shore, it seemed as though it might be too late, for the able *Lightning* had improved her opportunity in a glorious manner.

Elmer was seized with a fit of blind fury. He realized that he had been beaten at his own game, and by the boy whom he had always felt that sense of unjust hatred ever since the day Harry Watson first came to the Rivertown High School, and carried off the honors of that bob-sled dash down the hill.

The one thing he wanted to do now was to smash into the *Lightning,* regardless of consequences. Elmer believed in the "rule or ruin" policy. If his boat was no longer to be the fastest on the Conoque, he would at least never allow another to carry off the honors.

And so the reckless boy deliberately headed for the rival craft, his aim being to come down upon the port quarter of the frail *Lightning* with such an impetus that the other boat must be utterly demolished.

Paul saw what was impending. His quivering words of delight ceased to flow; for again he feared that this implacable and unscrupulous foe was in a position to carry out his quickly-conceived scheme of revenge.

But Harry knew better. His quick and experienced eye judged distances better than that of his chum. True, he edged in a bit closer toward the nearby shore; but that may have been for a double purpose. It gave him a trifle longer to make the pull; and at the same time rendered the possibility of Elmer and Pud coming to grief a *certainty*.

Five seconds is not a very long stretch of time; and yet there may be times in the experiences of some people when it seems next door to an eternity. And Paul was now feeling something that way.

He saw the oncoming *Glider* rushing down at them—he could mark the strained faces of the two desperate fellows who sprawled there on the thin planking that served as a deck to the runners—and he caught his breath with a queer little

click as he wondered whether after all Harry was going to carry his clever game through to a successful end; or if the new boat was destined to be smashed then and there on its first glorious cruise.

Then the crisis came.

In changing his course so much, in order to strike the *Lightning* squarely in the port quarter, Elmer had failed to realize that he was heading up in the teeth of the wind more than his rival. And in this way he was handicapped so far as keeping up his pace was concerned.

So the *Glider* swept to the rear of the new boat, just comfortably missing her. The victory had been won, since the *Lightning* had thus forged ahead, and passed her rival!

Paul started to give a whoop of delight. Then he stopped, for there was heard a sudden loud smash as the boat of the baffled plotters struck the shore.

"She's done for! Gone to flinders, Harry! Oh, what a race, and they've got just what they deserve. But I hope neither of them has been badly hurt!" exclaimed Paul, who, even in the excitement of victory could think of the defeated foe.

"I feel the same way as you do about it, Paul," replied the pilot at the tiller of the now undisputed champion of the Conoque, as he headed straight up the narrows toward the wide reach

above; "but I don't think that cuts much figure in it, for I'm sure I saw Pud jump to his feet out of the wreck; while Elmer was crawling out, and limping around as we turned that bend just below."

"Well, if ever a sly schemer got caught in his own trap that fellow was," remarked Paul, his indignation now getting the better of his sympathy. "And he sure deserves all he's got. We'll go on a way further, and then turn back. Perhaps we'll overtake our two friends, the enemy, limping along the ice on the way home; and they may even accept a lift back."

But after all, Paul's good intentions were fated never to be put to the test, for although they saw the wrecked *Glider* piled up in a shattered heap on the shore in the narrows, nothing of the two unlucky skippers was discovered on the way down the river; and they concluded the boys had made their way ashore, to hire some farmer to drive them all the way back to Rivertown.

When the story of the eventful race was told to the boys of Rivertown most of them declared that Elmer and Pud had been paid in their own coin; and few sympathized with them when they appeared on the streets with sundry strips of court plaster decorating their faces, and with decided limps.

"At any rate," said Paul, as he separated from

his chum at the Watson gate, "we *did* have a great time of it; and I reckon it's done you a heap of good, Harry," in which opinion the other certainly shared; and declared that he was glad he had accepted the invitation to try the new iceboat.

CHAPTER XXV

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

KEEPING more and more to himself, Harry finally gave up the pleasure of skating with his friends after school, preferring to go on long runs alone.

As he was gliding over the ice on one of these occasions, he saw a girl and a boy skating well out toward the middle of the river, so far from him that he could not recognize them.

For two days before, there had been a decided thaw and the ice in the middle of the river was not considered safe by the majority of the skaters. Accordingly, when Harry beheld the two figures, he was amazed.

"Must be from Lumberport or Cardell," he told himself. "None of our people would be foolish enough to go out there. Guess I'll see who it is."

And without delay, he started toward the couple.

"Good gracious! It's Viola and Craven!" he gasped, when he was near enough to get a good

look at them. For a moment, the boy was uncertain what to do. The girl had been keeping more and more aloof from him, and correspondingly more and more in the company of the rich student; and well he knew that Elmer would resent his advice in some insulting manner.

To his relief, however, the couple seemed to be so engrossed in one another that they did not see him, and after watching them for several minutes he was on the point of turning away when he saw them both sink, and then heard terrified screams for help.

The cries also reached some of the other boys and girls farther down the river, and they set out to the assistance of the struggling skaters. But none of them had the speed of Harry.

With a swiftness that was astounding, the boy rushed over the ice toward the hole that was constantly growing larger.

Badly frightened, both Viola and Elmer clutched frantically at the edges of the ice, only to have them break away, sometimes in small chunks, again in large pieces.

"Let Viola hang onto the edge by herself. Go farther down, you Craven!" shouted Harry as he dashed toward them.

But instead of obeying, having found a piece that would hold, the rich boy clung to it, allowing Viola to be carried past him.

"Oh, if I were only in the water with him, I'd fix the coward!" cried Harry. "I only wish the others were near enough to see what he did."

Thanks to his speed, our hero was so close to the hole that he was obliged to exercise caution lest he, too, break through.

"Here, give me a hand. That ice'll hold you!" shouted Elmer, as his rival approached.

But Harry seemed not to hear him.

"Hey, you fool, get me out of this; then we two can get Viola."

His pleading, however, was without avail. Straight along the edge of the hole Harry skated until he was abreast of the girl of whom he was so fond.

"Just keep hold of that ice cake a few moments longer," he called encouragingly. "I'll have you out in no time."

"But I'm too far from the edge. You never can reach me!" sobbed Viola. And as she saw the firm ice so close to her, she made a frantic effort to swim out, with the result that she lost her hold on the floating ice cake.

Harry had been hoping that the current would carry the girl in toward a part of the river where it would not be so difficult for him to get to her. But the instant he saw her hands slip from the cake, he sprang into the water.

Being a good swimmer, it required only a few

strokes for him to reach the side of the girl, but as he did so his troubles began.

Handicapped by his clothes and his skates, when Viola seized him in the despairing clutch of a drowning person, he was almost drawn under.

"No, no, you mustn't grab me around the throat, Viola!" he gasped. "Put your hands on my shoulders. If you don't, you'll drown us both. I won't let you sink—and if you'll only do as I tell you, I'll have you safe and sound in a jiffy."

Something there was in the tone in which the boy spoke that not only soothed the frenzied girl, but gave her confidence, and though she did not remove her hands from around Harry's neck, she ceased her struggles, permitting him, by means of the ice cakes, and treading water, to make his way toward the firm ice.

The other boys and girls who were hastening to the assistance of their schoolmates had watched the rescue eagerly, and when they saw the boy half roll, half lift the girl out onto the solid ice, they cheered lustily.

But in saving Viola, Harry had overtaxed his strength. Indeed, it had only been by putting every ounce of his power into the effort that he had been able to raise the girl from the water; and the instant he saw her safe, he sank back.

The realization that she was on sound ice, however, restored the girl to her senses; and as she

beheld the boy who had saved her from the icy waters lose his hold, she spun about; and with a quick move, caught his coat sleeve as his arm went up in the air.

To the task of pulling Harry from the water, however, Viola was not equal.

"Hurry! Hurry! Help me!" she shouted to the leaders of the other would-be rescue party. "I can't hold him much longer!"

"Hey, you, come and get me first! I've been in the water longer!" yelled Elmer.

But fortunately for Harry, it was Paul and Jerry who were in the van of the skaters, and at Viola's cries, they put on every ounce of speed they had, relieving her of her hold just in the nick of time.

Harry, however, was more used up than the others had believed, and it was several minutes before he opened his eyes.

"Is—is Viola safe?" he gasped.

"Indeed, I am, Harry!" returned the girl, bending over him. And there was a light in her eyes that thrilled the boy who had rescued her.

When he tried to get up, Harry found he had no strength.

"Somebody go get a sled," commanded Longback.

"And let him lie here cold and wet, while you're

going for it?" stormed Viola. "Pick him up and carry him, some of you."

Instantly Paul, Jerry, Dawson and another boy seized Harry, and half supporting, half carrying him, they got him to the shore, while Nettie and the other girls helped Viola, leaving Elmer to the tender mercies of Pud and Socker, who had finally arrived in time to drag him from the water.

But even they wasted few words on him, ashamed as they were to think that he should have sought to save himself at the sacrifice of Viola.

Straight to bed did Mrs. Watson put Harry when he was brought to the house, giving him warming drinks; while his chums rubbed his benumbed arms and legs. But he did not respond to their treatment as quickly as he should, and in alarm, his aunt finally sent for a doctor.

Grave, indeed, did the man of medicine look after he had completed his examination of the boy.

"If he'd been exposed for another half hour, I doubt if we could have brought him around," he announced. "As it is, it will be several days before he will be up and about."

But the physician was mistaken—his days were weeks.

His nervous system overtaxed because of his worry in regard to his father, Harry's physical

condition had run down, and the chill he received caused him to go off into pneumonia.

Harry's illness, however, served one good purpose—it caused a reaction in the feelings of his schoolmates. When it became noised around that he had endangered his life to rescue the girl who was skating with his implacable enemy, the boys and girls of Rivertown High realized that he was made of good material. And their change in feelings was shown by calls they made to ask about his condition, and the delicacies they sent in. But only Paul, Jerry and finally Viola were allowed to see him, though they were forbidden to talk to him.

Little, indeed, did he talk, and then only to ask if word had come from Jed Brown. And as his aunt was forced, day after day, to declare that she had heard nothing, the boy seemed to lose all interest in getting well.

But the crippled veteran, though silent, had not deserted the boy who had rescued him from the bully.

Arrived in Lawrenceburgh, he had vainly pleaded with several influential men to arrange for a stay in the execution of sentence upon Harry's father. But one and all, they turned a deaf ear to his pleadings, and Mr. Watson was forced to go to prison.

But on the very day he entered upon his term

of punishment, old Jed stumbled upon a clue which was to prove his innocence.

Chancing to drop into a tobacco store which was kept by one of his war comrades, he was amazed to find still another member of his old company dressed in handsome clothes and wearing a diamond ring. As the man had always been a ne'er-do-well, the change in his circumstances puzzled Jed, and when the fellow had taken his departure, he asked the shop-keeper what had caused it.

"That's what I'd like to find out," returned the tobacconist. "For the last six months, Bill has been going around with his pockets full of money. He's living at the Ransom House, too."

This being one of the chief hotels in Lawrenceburgh, the fact still further emphasized the turn in the veteran's fortunes.

"Ever give you any idea how he got the money?" asked Jed.

"Says he done it by writing. Bill always was a good writer, you know. Don't you remember how he used to forge pass orders for some of the boys when they wanted to leave camp?"

The words sent an idea to Jed's mind, and bidding the shop-keeper a hasty good-bye, he hied himself to the Ransom House, where he made many inquiries about the former soldier. At first he made little headway; but just as he was giv-

ing up in despair, he saw another old comrade.

"Say, what's the matter with you Rivertown folks?" asked this man. "Have you come down to see Bill Hawkins, too? Ned Snooks visits him about once a month."

At the mention of the Rivertown butcher, the crippled veteran gasped. Then he remembered that bad feeling had sprung up between the butcher and Mr. Watson over a real estate deal in which the former maintained that he had been swindled—and Jed immediately concluded that Ned Snooks was at the bottom of the charges against Harry's father.

But it was one thing to believe this, and quite another to prove it—yet with that perseverance which had distinguished him as a soldier in the ranks, Jed set about obtaining evidence; and finally succeeded in extracting a confession from Hawkins, that, acting for the butcher, he had forged the name of Snooks to some checks, and managed to lay the blame on Amos Watson.

Elated, Jed again approached the influential men who had refused to intercede for their fellow townsman, and after convincing them of the truth of the confession, received their aid in obtaining Mr. Watson's release from prison, and subsequent exoneration from the charge of forgery.

Ignorant of the illness of Harry, the old veteran did not report on his progress, and the first news the boy had of the change in his father's condition was when a telegram was brought to him.

With trembling fingers he opened it, then uttered a faint cry of joy, as he read:

"Harry Watson,
Rivertown.
Charges against me proven false. I want you to come to Lawrenceburgh to spend Sunday with me. FATHER."

Better than any tonic or care was the news to Harry, and though he was not able to go to his father, Mr. Watson came to him, bringing good old Jed Brown with him, and happy, indeed, was the reunion.

Despite his villainy, Mr. Watson refused to prosecute Ned Snooks; but public opinion was so aroused against the butcher that he sold his property, and moved away from Rivertown, while the man he had so wronged decided to live in the town, and in due course opened a real estate office.

"But didn't Pud know about this forgery from the first?" asked Harry, of his parent, one day.

"I think not, my son," replied Mr. Watson. "Mr. Snooks was a man who kept his affairs to

himself. Had Pud known he would have taunted you long before he did."

"It was grand of old Jed Brown to act as he did," murmured our hero. "We owe him a great deal."

"He is to live with me and your Aunt Mary after this," said the father. "He is going to help me in my real estate business. As he is getting old, I shall let him take it as easy as he pleases." And so it was arranged.

When Harry returned to Rivertown High he was given an ovation that made him blush like a girl. The only person who remained in the background was Elmer Craven. He had nothing to say; and when, during the following Fall, the Craven family moved to Boston, Elmer was glad to go along, so he would not have to return to a school where he was in such bad odor.

Harry continued at Rivertown High School for the full term of four years; and when he graduated he did so at the top of his class. Then he went into the real estate business with his father, and both made money rapidly. His friendship for Viola ripened into a much more tender feeling; and it is reported that some day the pair will be married. But though Harry was successful as a land dealer he never became tired of talking about his high-school days.

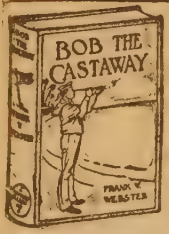
"We had some great times," he said, one day, to Paul.

"We sure did!" replied his chum. "In my opinion there is no better school in all the world than Rivertown High!"

"Right you are!" responded Harry. "And as matters have turned out I am very glad that I came here."

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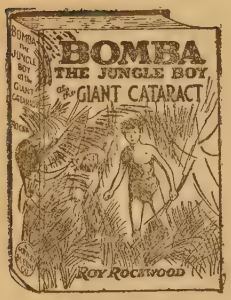
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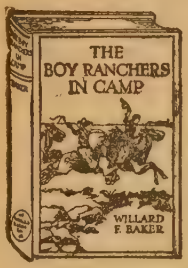
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